DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

SATURDAY

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‘I’m not everyone’s cup of tea’

Holly Willoughby

Exclusive interview: Magazine

Summer Walks Guide

20 great routes

Weekend

Net zero plans rolled back

● Electric car sales targets to be relaxed ● Energy secretary could delay ‘clean power’ pledge

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor
Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Andy Burnham’s government is looking to relax some of Labour’s net zero targets to help tackle the cost of living crisis.

Ministers are planning to loosen rules on electric car sales, which may mean that half the new cars sold at the end of the decade will still have petrol engines. Under the present law, by 2030 only 20 per cent will be able to use fossil fuel. Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, said the government would not stick rigidly to the pledge made by her predecessor, Ed Miliband, to nearly eliminate fossil fuels from Britain’s power supplies by 2030 if doing so would risk higher household bills.

In her first big interview, Fahnbulleh said Britain faced an “affordability challenge” that the government needed to tackle. She suggested that Miliband’s pledge could be delayed by one or two years. He promised to produce enough clean energy to meet 95 per cent of the UK’s electricity demand by 2030 while also lowering bills by £300 per year.

Asked whether her priority was to meet the commitment even if bills would rise, Fahnbulleh said: “My job is to keep people with us ... and the way that I do that is to say to people, we are doing the hard trade-offs to make sure that we are doing this transition in a way that still delivers affordability.”

The Department for Transport is considering relaxing the zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which stipulates what proportion of cars sold each year must be electric after demand failed to rise as quickly as expected. It requires 33 per cent of new vehicles sold this year to be fully electric. That rises to 80 per cent in 2030, when the sale of fully petrol and diesel cars will be banned. Hybrid vehicles will be permitted until 2035.

The department will open a consultation next week that will propose

Continued on page 9

MARK FLANDERS/BNPS

Jump for joy A short-beaked common dolphin delighted kayakers with acrobatics in Weymouth, Dorset. The highly social mammals live in waters all around the UK

Widdecombe police reopen burglary investigation

Lowri Lewis

Police investigating the death of the former MP Ann Widdecombe have reopened an investigation into reports of an attempted burglary at an address in London in April last year.

The investigation, carried out by the Metropolitan Police and Counter Terrorism Policing London, was closed and no arrests were made.

After it was reopened, counterterrorism police said they had identified a line of inquiry that “was not identified and pursued by them at the time”, and which “may have been relevant”. The force has since referred itself to the police watchdog. Last night the Independent Office for Police Conduct said that it was investigating the case.

Widdecombe, 78, died after being hit 21 times over the head with a hammer at her home in Devon. Joshua Kerry, 28, has been charged with her murder.

Vicki Evans, senior national co-ordinator for counterterrorism policing, announced the reopening of the investigation and added: “Given the ... significant public interest in the investigation into Ann Widdecombe’s death, it was of critical importance for us to provide this update.”

Kerry, who appeared at Westminster magistrates’ court on July 21, is alleged to have driven nearly 265 miles to the Reform spokeswoman’s home in Haytor, Dartmoor, and attacked her shortly after midday on Wednesday, July 8.

Kerry was remanded in custody. An administrative hearing will take place on October 9, and a further plea and trial preparation hearing on November 20. A provisional trial date has been set for June 2027.

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News

Today's highlights

2.15pm The award-winning documentarian **Joe Pearlman**

2.45pm Psychotherapist **Dr Peter Meades**, author of *I'm Fine (But Not Really): What Men Need To Know, Without Going to Therapy*

3.30pm **Bear Grylls**, right, on his new TV series, *The Chosen in the Wild*

5.50pm **John Scott**, who's just completed a 2,300-mile trek connecting Britain's 15 national parks

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TODAY'S EDITION

Arday case prompts review

Cambridge will review its appointment procedures after accusations that Jason Arday, who resigned this week accused of plagiarism, was selected for "media visibility" reasons rather than academic excellence. Academics accused the university of "parading" him due to his race, youth and "transformative potential". Page 7

Virtue and Vice police on patrol

The Times walks the streets of Kabul in Afghanistan with the Virtue and Vice police tasked by the Taliban with enforcing a repressive law that governs everything from how women can dress and who they can be with to beard lengths, hookahs, music, dog-fighting and befriending non-Muslims. Page 40

EasyJet takes on £3bn debt

EasyJet will take on £3 billion in debt after its planned takeover by the US investment firm Apollo Capital Management. On Thursday, the airline's board recommended shareholders accept a 715p-a-share offer from Apollo, valuing easyJet at £5.7 billion. Apollo gatecrashed another contender, Castlelake, which is now out of the running. Page 45

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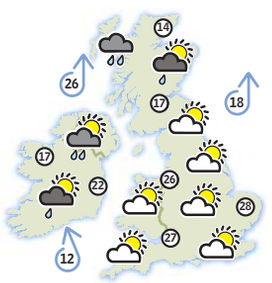
THE WEATHER



Warm and dry with sunny spells in England and Wales, some rain elsewhere. **Full forecast, page 73**

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Burnham powerless to stop early release of child abusers

Oliver Wright Policy Editor
Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

Andy Burnham will be unable to prevent the early release of some child sex offenders, including Asian gang groomers, without a fundamental rethink of the government's plan to reduce prison overcrowding, The Times has been told.

The prime minister instructed the Ministry of Justice to conduct a review of all grooming offenders in prison after The Times found a number of cases where men who were convicted of assaulting children as part of historical investigations into Asian grooming gangs were not excluded from the early-release scheme.

As many of the cases took place before anti-grooming laws were introduced in 2003, the men were charged with indecent assault, which does not fall within the exemptions to the early-release scheme announced by the prime minister this week. But despite the review The Times was told Burnham will not be able to keep them or other historic child sex offenders in prison — unless he excludes everyone with a conviction for indecent assault.

Whitehall sources said this was because it was a "fundamental" principle of law that politicians could not decide the length of sentences for individuals, which was always a matter for the courts.

The same principle applies in the case of PC Andrew Harper's killers, who were convicted of manslaughter and are due for early release under the scheme.

In this case the only way Burnham could exclude them is if he also barred all other manslaughter prisoners from early release.

The inclusion of Harper's killers in the scheme has led to widespread public outcry, including from the police officer's family and Stuart Blaik, the former detective superintendent at Thames Valley police who led the investigation into his killing.

Blaik told The Times it was "fundamentally wrong" that Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers, who were sentenced to 13 years, will be eligible for early release next year.

"It's disrespectful on all levels," he said.

"It's disrespecting the family, it's disrespecting Andrew and it just shouldn't happen. I can't get my head around why cases like this that are so serious should be part of that early release scheme."

He said the decision is "really hurting" Harper's family, particularly so close to the anniversary of his death on August 15.

"You go through all that whole process, which is traumatic, it's very stressful, it's very upsetting. And then at the end of it, a sentence is passed by a crown court judge or a High Court, and it can be changed ... That's fundamentally not right."

Blaik, who left the force in 2023, said Harper's killers "showed no remorse" during the trial.

"At the time when they had the opportunity to really say how sorry they were, how devastated they were, they had the opportunity to do that and they didn't do it," he said. "And now it's too late."

More than 700,000 people have signed a petition to stop the early release of Harper's killers.

Aileen O'Connor, the chair of the Thames Valley police federation, who started the petition, said the "public have spoken loudly".

Reform backer 'had Times journalist investigated'

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

A prominent Reform UK member reportedly hired private investigators to examine a Sunday Times journalist after he reported on Nigel Farage's finances.

Arron Banks, a millionaire businessman and former Ukip donor, has appeared to admit directing investigators to look into Gabriel Pogrund, the editor of the Sunday Times Insight team. It was after an Insight report last month that revealed Farage had received financial support from George Cottrell, a convicted criminal and former Ukip aide known as "Posh George".

Banks, who co-founded the Leave.EU campaign before the 2016 referendum, is said to have instructed Precision Risk and Intelligence, a private investigations company which he previously owned and which has since been dissolved, to examine Pogrund.

He did not deny commissioning the inquiry when approached by the New Statesman. "We believe the Sunday Times used hacked information and that was an area of interest. We do have an investigative arm that's got advanced capabilities," Banks told the magazine. Asked directly whether he had paid investigators to look into Pogrund, he said: "When you live by the sword, you die by the sword."

The Times was unable to reach Banks for comment last night.

The Sunday Times rejected Banks's suggestion its reporting had relied upon hacked material and condemned his response to its investigation. A spokesman said: "If what Mr Banks claims to have done is true then it is reprehensible that his reaction to our reporting is to place a journalist under surveillance ... This story was not based on hacked information. It was based on responsible and professional journalism."

The Sunday Times has published a series of investigations into Farage's finances and his relationship with Cottrell. Last weekend it reported he negotiated a behind-the-scenes agreement to return as Reform leader months before the 2024 general election, in an arrangement overseen by Cottrell.

It is not the first time Pogrund had been the subject of an investigation over his reporting. Labour Together, the group credited with helping Sir Keir Starmer become Labour leader, paid the US public affairs firm Apco Worldwide £36,000 after Pogrund reported on donations it had failed to declare.

Russia could attack Nato 'before 2027'

George Grylls Washington

Russia could launch a small invasion of a Nato country as soon as later this year as President Putin becomes increasingly frustrated at his failure to gain ground in Ukraine, US intelligence reports have warned.

There is a "low" chance of a Russian incursion into Nato territory in the coming months but the likelihood increases over time, according to the reports described to The Wall Street Journal by unnamed officials.

The aim would be to test Nato's resolve and undermine its Article 5 commitment to collective self-defence.

US intelligence assesses that between this autumn and 2029, Putin could opt to make a cyberattack against a Nato country, send unmarked armed groups to occupy a part of the alliance's territory or even start a limited invasion of the eastern flank. The timeline outlined roughly corresponds to warnings from European officials.

Shortly before his resignation, Sir Keir Starmer said Western intelligence had assessed there could be a Russian attack on Nato "as soon as 2030".

More pupils to get higher A-level grades

Georgia Lambert

Boys are expected to outperform girls and more pupils are set to secure the highest A-level grades than in any year outside the pandemic this summer, an education expert has predicted.

Professor Alan Smithers, director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research at the University of Buckingham, forecasts a modest increase in the number of A-level entries that are awarded either an A* or A. He expects boys to widen their lead in the number achieved. "The good news for those waiting ... to receive the results is that they went up in 2025. Boys especially did well, increasing their lead at A* and going ahead at A*/A for the first time in seven years," he said.

Smithers argues that the gradual rise in top grades over the past two years may signal the beginning of a longer-term trend rather than a temporary fluctuation as the growing popularity of maths and other quantitative subjects continues to push up results.

In 2025, 28.3 per cent of entries were awarded an A or A*, up from 27.8 per cent in 2024, 27.2 per cent in 2023 and above 25.4 per cent in 2019. Last year's results were the highest proportion of such grades on record outside the pandemic-affected years, when the figure peaked at 44.8 per cent in 2021.

In a report published ahead of A-level results day next Thursday, Smithers said there has been a "big swing" in recent years to subjects such as maths and economics which are "much higher yielders" of top grades as job prospects "have become more influential".

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Young people and parents can be confident that their exam grades will be a true reflection of their abilities. This report is entirely speculative, as relevant data has not been released."

‘Wagyu of the sea’ swims back to UK

Bluefin tuna have returned to British waters, delighting biologists — and chefs, writes **Adam Vaughan**

ANTHONY DEVLIN FOR THE TIMES

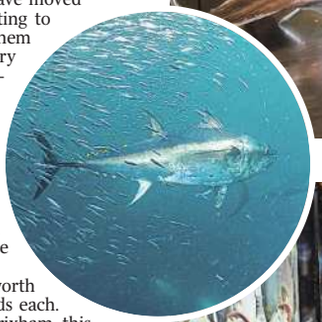
Luke French, the co-owner of Jöro restaurant in Sheffield, is one of the chefs using bluefin tuna caught in UK waters to make high-end dishes

Giant bluefin tuna are better known for record auctions in Tokyo where fish weighing more than 200kg can sell for millions of pounds. Now British chefs and diners are celebrating a jump in the amount of top sashimi-grade tuna coming from British waters.

Fishing crews serving Brixham Fish Market in Devon have been bringing in up to 12 bluefin tuna a day since the licensed season began last month. A year ago, the number was just two a day, and for decades the world’s biggest tuna species had been absent in British seas.

The catches are a blessing for high-end diners, who can look forward to seeing more dishes containing the “wagyu of the sea” in the coming weeks.

It is the latest boon for Britain’s fishing industry, which has already benefited from a “gold rush” of new octopus populations moving to UK shores.



“The tuna fish have moved in now. We’re starting to see numbers of them now,” said Barry Young, managing director of Brixham Trawler Agents.

“The number of licences has doubled. There are more boats doing it, so we are expecting more tuna this year to come across the market.”

Bluefin tuna are worth thousands of pounds each. Tuna landed at Brixham this season have weighed from 60kg up to, so far, 135kg. The fish usually sell for £7 to £12 per kg, said Young. Some have sold for as much as £22.50 per kg.

Many are caught in the southwest, off the coast of Cornwall, Devon and the Isles of Scilly. Some have been caught far into the Channel, off Jersey.

Shetty Chavan, the only fisherman from Jersey to win a bluefin tuna licence, caught his first on July 25. He said it was “a great feeling” and told the BBC he would donate the money from his first catch to charity.

Some of those turning their hands to octopus in UK waters have been making £20,000 a week, but the initial small limits on bluefin tuna mean its potential for the fishing sector has gone largely unnoticed.

Most of the bluefin tuna caught today is destined to end up as a high-end dish in British restaurants, Young said.

Mount St Restaurant in Mayfair, London, features the fish on its seasonal menu, where chefs post videos deep-frying it before serving it with seaweed mayonnaise. Chefs at Fallow restaurant, also in the capital, freeze the loins to make it easier to slice before carving it to serve slices at their “raw bar”.

“I’m a huge, huge lover of tuna. Particularly bluefin because it is so fatty and it’s got so much umami, it’s so delicious. The texture is absolutely unbelievable,” said Luke French, chef and co-owner of Jöro restaurant in Sheffield. “We will utilise the entire fish. Literally nose to tail, fin to fin: we’ll use the bones, use the skin — everything.”

Ricki Weston, the executive chef at Whatley Manor Hotel in the Cotswolds, said: “I think it’s quite easy to forget just how much amazing produce actually comes from this country.” Weston said part of the appeal for high-end restaurants was the “storytelling” involved with the tuna, such as the names of the fishermen and their boats.

Bluefin tuna has a long history in the UK. In the 1930s, the Yorkshire coast — particularly Scarborough — supported a world-renowned recreational bluefin tuna fishery that drew wealthy anglers.

However, the population collapsed in the 1950s, in part because of the decline of mackerel, which they prey on.

It wasn’t until 2014 that they were seen again in significant numbers. Dr Katie Smith, a researcher at the Marine Biological Association, said warming seas were one reason for their return. A 15-year international conservation plan launched in 2007 is also believed to have played a key role.

Sea temperatures are projected to rise further. Smith said: “There is a high likelihood that we will continue to see more bluefin tuna in UK waters.”

An abundance of local prey has helped too, said Tom Horton at the University of Exeter. A research project he conducted found 65 per cent of the tuna solely ate one of three small oily fish: anchovies, sardines and sprats.

Those fish are part of the foundation of the marine food chain. With added pressure from the tuna, Horton said close monitoring will be needed to avoid “accidental overexploitation” of the smaller fish, which could cause their populations to crash — and force the bluefin tuna to migrate elsewhere.

There are 30 commercial vessels licensed to catch bluefin tuna, which is double the number last year. Each is allocated a catch limit of 4 tonnes, an increase from the 3-tonne limit last year.

For those hoping to get a rare taste, Brooke Schlipf, of the Good Fish Guide ratings, run by the Marine Conservation Society, said bluefin tuna is more likely to be served near where it is landed in Devon and Cornwall. It can also be bought via specialist fishmongers and online retailers.

UK moves to the rhythm of the Med, Rob Hutton, page 31

Time and tide wait for no man in new sandcastle-building show

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

Most holidaymakers have attempted to build a sandcastle, usually ending with a modest bucket-shaped mound that barely survives a rogue wave.

Such creations are unlikely to trouble the judges on *Race Against The Tide*, a BBC series launching on August 18, in which amateurs compete to build the best sculptures using up to eight tonnes of sand.

Highlights include sculptures of a megalodon fin rising from the sand with a fisherman oblivious to the threat, a fish leaping from a portion of chips and a pod of dolphins that appear to be swimming as the tide comes in.

Jamie Wardley, a professional sand sculpture and creative director at arts studio Sand In Your Eye, was drafted in by producers as their “Paul Hollywood of sandcastles” after initially being recruited to scout the perfect beach for the show. He said that it was a privilege to be given the opportunity to help inspire audiences to have a go at sand sculpting.

“It’s one of those things that you do with your friends and your family,” he said. “You go to the beach together and are surrounded by nature ... and do something physical and creative. Those are all really beautiful things and great for people’s mental health.”

Wardley selected West Sands beach in St Andrews, Scotland, as the location due to its fresh estuary-fed sand. Enriched by silt and clay, it provided the competitors with the ideal building blocks for sculpting, compared to the rounder grains found on most beaches.

The contestants, who included a chainsaw operator, cake-maker and kickboxer, had creative backgrounds but were new to sandsculpting and are paired with an expert for support.

But while they expected the sculpting itself to be the hardest part of the show, the physicality required was a surprise. They would start each seven-hour day with a fresh patch of beach and have to dig up and compact tonnes of sand before they could start work on their creations, sometimes up to three metres high. The show’s six episodes were filmed consecutively over a week.

“It is incredibly hard work,” said Wardley. “After they were finished digging they had to start sculpting. That is reasonably physical but required them to use a different part of their brain to really concentrate. Doing that for six days on the trot was a marathon.”

Wardley added: “There is real jeopardy in the show. There is no extra time. It isn’t a ticking clock, you can literally see those sea horses roaring on the horizon and they are coming in.”

Harry Bell, one of the show’s executive producers, said that the nature of the show brought all of those involved together in an extraordinary way.

“Once judging was over we’d all go down and sit quietly by the sculptures and just watch as the tide slowly came in and reclaimed them — 60 crew and cast sitting together with a well earned beer watching quietly as Mother Nature did her work.”

Catastrophic failures left Levy free to murder

Simon Levy's arrest was captured on bodycam. One of his victims filmed him on

David Woode Crime Editor

A series of disastrous errors left a high-risk sexual predator free to murder two sex workers, violently rape another and sexually assault ten women on trains across London.

Simon Levy, 40, a convicted sex offender, slipped under the radar after a combination of police officer "incompetence", weak monitoring by sex offender managers and failures to remand the partially blind attacker despite his escalating crimes.

On Friday, Levy was found guilty of murdering Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo, 53, on March 16, 2025, and Sheryl Wilkins, 39, on August 24, 2025. He was also convicted of two rapes, grievous bodily harm and intentional suffocation against another woman, who cannot be named, on January 21, 2025. Levy, of Tottenham, north London, denied the charges. He will be sentenced at a later date.

Police have urged potential victims of Levy, who used the names "Levi" and "Seamus", to come forward.

It can now be reported that in February, Levy was found guilty of 11 sexual assaults on women aged 18 to 32 between October 2023 and May 2025, after a trial at Inner London crown court. Levy was jailed for six years after that trial.

The Times can report how multiple agencies failed to protect women, and left a dangerous predator free to murder.

Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo, 53, and Sheryl Wilkins, 39, right, were murdered by Simon Levy. Their families described them as much loved but vulnerable

'Full-hand squeeze'

At morning rush hour in October 2024, commuters filed on to a busy Central line train at Stratford, east London.

A young woman held an overhead bar as the train travelled towards the City. Levy was standing behind her. During the journey, the woman felt pressure on her buttocks. Then she felt a "full-hand squeeze" and immediately moved away.

"She felt disgusted and scared. He moved towards her and pushed his body into her," prosecutors said. The woman, who cannot be named, decided to record him. She captured Levy trying to assault an unknown woman.

They had CCTV of him and it should have prompted a fast response by a force that claims "tackling sexual offending on the railway is a priority for us". Levy was arrested in November and refused to answer questions. British Transport Police (BTP) was too slow organising an ID parade so Levy's bail was extended to April 2025. During this period he murdered Valencia-Trujillo and sexually assaulted five women.

Police told of rapist's identity

The B&M car park on Tottenham High Road is known as a place of "drug use and sexual services for money". Levy, who lived a ten-minute walk away, knew it well.

On January 21, 2025, while on bail for the train sexual assaults, Levy approached a sex worker. They first met in 2021 during a fleeting, non-sexual encounter and once lived near him, prosecutors said. She suggested going to the car park. What followed was a brutal ten-minute attack. Levy "jumped on her with all of his weight" and broke her collarbone. He raped her twice.

Four days later the woman was arrested for an unrelated matter and told officers a "black African male who lived in White Hart Lane" raped her. Crucially, she described Levy's address.

At the time she was withdrawing from heroin and struggled to engage with police. Levy was not arrested for the attack until September. By then, he had killed two women.

'Maybe it's mistaken identity'

Levy was familiar with the streets of Walworth, south London. In 2023, he spent three months living in a halfway house while on licence. He had been released from prison part-way through a 36-month sentence.

In July 2018 he sexually assaulted a woman at a party in Camden. Weeks later Levy repeatedly put his hand down a woman's trousers at the Notting Hill Carnival, committing assault by penetration. While an inmate, Levy sexually assaulted a female prison officer, an offence he was convicted of in February 2026.

It can now be reported that Levy was recalled to prison in May 2024 after a rape complaint. He spent three months inside and was released early by the criminal justice system.

As a registered sex offender Levy was subject to monitoring by the Metropolitan Police's Jigsaw team, tasked with managing sex offenders and high-risk violent criminals. When they visited him on March 28, 2025, Levy claimed he stayed at his mother's home and "watches films and YouTube". They were unaware that he had recently murdered his first victim.

In the image released by her family, Valencia-Trujillo clutches a rose. A keen salsa dancer, her family described her as fun and full of life. But prosecutors described her as "vulnerable" and said she traded sex for money or drugs. On March 16 she left home at 5.56am. Levy was caught on CCTV close by that afternoon.

He had travelled to Elephant and Castle using a bus driver's Oyster card. The card was reported lost in August 2024 but remained activated. BTP knew Levy had it but it wasn't confiscated. The force claimed they didn't know who the card belonged to. But the photocard was marked "staff" and the driver's name was printed on the front, the court heard. The registration number was traceable to him. BTP made no effort to track its use, it later emerged.

Valencia-Trujillo and Levy met in Burgess Park. They walked to the near-

A poice mugshot of Levy, 40, of Tottenham, who is partially blind

derelict Aylesbury Estate where Levy murdered her. Valencia-Trujillo's body was found face down in a stairwell the following day. A post-mortem examination proved inconclusive.

Eleven days after the killing, Levy sexually assaulted a woman on a train. BTP planned to arrest him but agreed to give way to the Met's homicide probe.

On April 1, Levy was arrested for Valencia-Trujillo's murder. He was wearing superhero pyjamas when Met officers explained he had been "forensically identified". He said: "Maybe it could be mistaken identity." Levy was bailed.

Police searched his bedroom and found stacks of newspaper. Analysis of his devices showed he viewed news stories about John Worboys, the "black cab rapist", and Christopher Halliwell, a former cab driver who murdered two women. He searched Tube maps and kept documents titled "my sex record", which detailed sexual positions, chat-up lines and sex workers.

'Total disregard for bail'

By early spring Levy's offending intensified. Prosecutors said he "used the hustle and bustle of busy, rush-hour trains as cover."

He targeted a young woman travelling with her mother on an Overground train and "grabbed her buttocks with force". She said: "I felt scared and tried to hold back tears. I told my mum, I said, 'don't make a big deal ... you don't know how someone is going to react'."

Levy, who lost sight in his right eye in 2024, was arrested on May 2 for five sexual assaults. He told police: "I am partially blind and it's possible for me to make contact with someone unintentionally." He denied the offences when he appeared at Highbury Corner magistrates' court in north London.

BTP told the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that Levy was on bail for Valencia-Trujillo's murder. They said his offending "appears to be escalating" and warned he was a "danger to the public". No record exists of the CPS's submission to the court.

Levy was released on conditional bail, and told not to use public transport during rush hour unless he was attending a medical or solicitors' appointment. As predicted, Levy committed another sexual assault in late May.

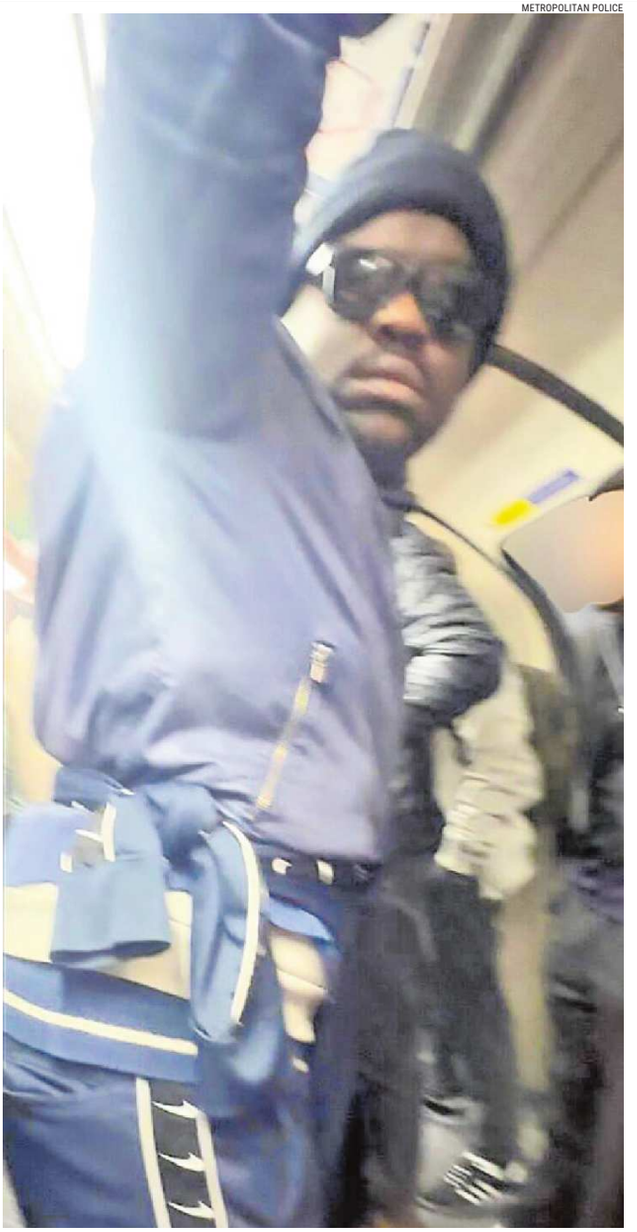
Levy was back before the magistrates' court on June 21 charged with two more sexual assaults and a breach of bail. BTP told CPS lawyers that he "continues to commit offences of a sexual nature" and has a "total disregard for bail conditions". Once again, Levy was released on bail.

Jigsaw officers met Levy on July 10 and he said he was "not going out much". These visits took place after the Met was told it was failing to "safely manage" sex offenders. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary identified "a lack of training in both the process of managing suspects and offenders" after an inspection in 2024. The policing inspectorate recommended the force "immediately" review the Jigsaw team's operating model.

The Met referred themselves to the police watchdog over their monitoring of Levy as a registered sex offender. Two officers face gross misconduct and misconduct proceedings respectively.

Levy failed to attend a court hearing on June 3, and missed another on August 11. The court accepted his "mental health issue" and a warrant was not

METROPOLITAN POLICE



her phone, right, in a London Underground carriage. A blue North Face jacket was later discovered at his address

Toxic indifference makes a mockery of protection of women

David Woode
Comment

A "collective system failure". This was a senior police officer's press-friendly assessment of the investigative incuriosity and systematic incompetence that enabled Simon Levy's fatal crime spree. But it's deeper than that. It's institutional indifference and collective irresponsibility at a time when police and politicians boast about doing more than ever to ensure the protection of women.

Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo and Sheryl Wilkins are dead. Another woman, who cannot be named, survived a violent rape. And at least 13 women will live with the memories of being groped, grabbed and humiliated at work, at parties and on trains. That admission of a "collective system failure" by multiple agencies will bring no comfort to the bereaved families.

Let's start with British Transport Police. It failed to prioritise a crucial identification parade in January 2025 that could have taken Levy off the streets.

The force also knew Levy was using a bus driver's Oyster card — registered lost in August 2024 but not deactivated — to criss-cross London and attack women. The force said the card was "returned to him without the understanding of what [it] was and without knowledge that it had been stolen or lost".

It was a curious explanation. One side showed the driver's photo. The other was marked "Staff" and it clearly belonged to a "bus operator". The jury saw it, as did reporters. The registration number could have been traced to the driver but officers apparently never checked it. And no one thought to track its use. Why?

Then there's the Metropolitan Police. In January 2025, officers arrested a sex worker for breaching a community protection notice. During that street interaction she told officers that Levy had brutally raped her four days earlier. I felt a lump in my throat when she told of when she regained consciousness and tried to alert passers-by. "Nobody helped me," she said.

The woman described Levy's appearance and his exact address to the officers. But her account was not met with investigative curiosity. Levy wasn't arrested for the attack until after he had murdered two women. Why? Would she have received a different service if she wasn't a sex worker?

The fact that Levy was a convicted sex offender is particularly egregious. The Met's Jigsaw team, tasked with managing high-risk violent criminals and sex offenders, accepted his claims that he stayed at home and "watched films and YouTube videos" when they visited him in late March 2025. Unknown to them he had murdered Valencia-Trujillo days earlier.

And let's not forget the Crown Prosecution Service. Its lawyers were told that Levy was on bail for Valencia-Trujillo's murder. They were told his offending "appears to be escalating"; BTP said he was a "danger to the public" and had a "total disregard for bail conditions". But at no point in two magistrates' court hearings did lawyers tell the court. On both occasions Levy was bailed and left to roam the streets.

We are now being jetwashed with apologies. Promises to do better. Declarations that women's personal safety is a "priority" for policing. We've heard it all before.

Women have lost their lives but no one has lost their job. How is this allowed to happen time and again?

SEVEN YEARS OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Summer 2018: Commits first known sexual assaults, groping a woman in July, assaulting another by penetration in August.
2019-2021: Not arrested until October 2019. Convicted in August 2021 and jailed for three years. Judge does not impose sexual harm prevention order — not appealed.
April 2022: Sexually assaults female prison officer. Met Police does not interview him until after release despite CCTV evidence. Charged in 2025.
Feb-Oct 2023: Released on licence. In October, he sexually assaults a woman on the Tube. British Transport Police (BTP) fail to identify him.
May-August 2024: Recalled to prison after being accused of rape. Not charged. Released early.
Oct 2024: Sexually assaults a woman on the Tube. Police fail to identify him from CCTV footage.
Nov 2024: After assaulting two more women on trains — one records him — arrested and interviewed by BTP. Released on bail without charge.
Late 2024: Bail extended due to delays in organising ID parade. Risk status not upgraded even after continues to sexually assault women. BTP lets him keep Oyster card stolen from a bus driver.
Jan 21, 2025: Violently rapes a sex worker. When arrested for a minor offence, she gives police an account and accurate description of his address. Arrested in September.
March 16, 2025: Murders Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo. Arrested weeks later and bailed. Death is not classified as murder.
March 27, 2025: Sexually assaults another woman.
April 3, 2025: BTP delays arrest for transport offences after discovering he has been arrested on suspicion of murder. Extends bail to May 1.
May 2, 2025: Charged with five sex assaults. Appears in court, granted bail.
May-June 2025: Continues attacking women on trains. Granted bail again.
May 2025: The Met closes January rape investigation, citing difficulties tracing homeless victim.
July-August 2025: Misses two court hearings. No arrest warrants are issued.
August 24, 2025: Murders Sheryl Wilkins. Only then is Valencia-Trujillo's death investigated as murder, revealing unexamined CCTV placing Levy near her. Finally charged with murders and January rape.

sought for his arrest. Levy was free to roam the streets, and claim another life.

Sheryl Wilkins was much loved by her family but she was also vulnerable. Wilkins had recently served a short prison sentence and sometimes performed sexual services for money or drugs, the court heard.

In the early hours of August 24, Wilkins and Levy crossed paths on Tottenham High Road. CCTV showed them walking to the B&M car park where they disappeared behind a low wall. At 6.30am, officers on patrol discovered Wilkins's body in the car park. Police initially thought it was the woman Levy violently raped in January.

A post-mortem examination was inconclusive. Levy was arrested at home on September 4 and told officers: "It doesn't mean I did anything, I explained this last time," referring to his arrest for Valencia-Trujillo's murder. He was charged with Wilkins's murder and the rape against the first woman. Police also charged him with Valencia-Trujillo's murder in November 2025.

Levy stood trial for the sexual assaults in January under a news blackout. He claimed each of the women were wrong and said "any contact was entirely accidental". Jurors dismissed his defence. Michael Evans KC, the trial judge, said Levy had mounted a "deliberate, persistent and carefully orchestrated campaign of targeted assault".

At the Old Bailey trial, Tom Little KC, the lead prosecutor, said Levy preyed on "vulnerable women" who offered sex for money or drugs because he thought "he would get away with it".

Jurors were told about Levy's 13 convictions for "sexual offences upon women" but the details were not disclosed. Levy did not give evidence.

'Collective system failure'

Kevin Southworth, a deputy assistant commissioner at the Met, described Levy's offending as "amongst the most harrowing we've seen in recent times".

Southworth told reporters: "There has been a collective system failure which has led to this [and] there is reflection here for all agencies." He cited the Met, BTP, the CPS, in particular "the magistrates' courts where Levy appeared for remand hearings".

The Independent Office for Police Conduct said: "We are examining whether action could or should have been taken to prevent his reoffending, and if all officers ... followed policies, procedures and training. We are also assessing whether ... changes should be implemented in light of the events under investigation. The serving of conduct notices does not necessarily mean disciplinary proceedings will follow."

Detective Chief Superintendent Peter Fulton, BTP's head of crime and public protection, said an officer's "incompetence" meant the identity parade was "not prioritised" when Levy's Tube offending was first detected. Fulton said the officer "no longer works within an investigative process".

Charlie Doyle, an assistant chief constable at BTP, added: "We ... acknowledge that our initial investigation was not carried out at a fast enough pace. Opportunities to expedite the investigation were missed and we have amended our procedures to address these issues to ensure that repeat offenders are dealt with expeditiously."

The CPS admitted its actions "fell short" after lawyers failed to tell a court that Levy was on bail for murder during two bail applications. When asked if anyone has faced disciplinary action, a spokesperson said: "The organisation has addressed this matter in accordance with our internal policies and procedures."

Lisa Ramsarran, chief crown prosecutor for the CPS, added: "Our actions fell short of the standards that victims, families and the public are entitled to expect. We are taking action to strengthen training, case oversight and our approach to bail and risk in serious sexual offence cases."

News

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Eyes front Officer cadets at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst take part in Sovereign's Parade, which marks their graduation after 44 weeks of intensive training

Councils approve £50m projects with mixed-sex changing areas

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Councils have approved more than £50 million of leisure centre projects with mixed-sex changing areas after the Supreme Court ruling on biological sex.

At least three local authorities gave the go-ahead to schemes with unisex or mixed changing in the months after the judgment in April last year.

The projects came under scrutiny as ukactive, the trade body for the leisure and fitness industry, warned yesterday that the "village" facilities, which are open-plan areas with individual cubicles, "may be discriminatory" if they were the only option.

Campaigners had previously raised concerns about the number of sexual offences recorded in mixed changing rooms. Police data obtained through freedom of information requests by the Women's Rights Network last year recorded at least 16 rapes, 80 sexual assaults and 65 acts of voyeurism at sports centres in one year. Where the officers recorded the location of the offences, most were in mixed-sex areas.

New statutory guidance which came into force on Wednesday warned that providing changing facilities only on a mixed-sex basis could amount to direct or indirect discrimination against women, or lead to harassment.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said that mixed facilities with cubicles with floor-to-ceiling lockable doors could be lawful but ukactive's guidance said mixed "villages" could still be problematic.

Fiona McAnena, the director of campaigns at Sex Matters, said: "This isn't a case of oversight or ignorance. We know that women have repeatedly warned councils that the mixed-sex facilities in their new leisure centres do not feel safe and may be unlawful.

"It's shocking that councils are still spending public money building these so-called 'changing villages'."

Sport England, the government-backed body which advises on the design of sports facilities, has continued to publish guidance saying village changing was the "preferred option for most new pools".

It said that for most swimming pools a mixed-sex changing village with at least two lockable group changing rooms offered the "most cost-effective and easily managed arrangement".

However McAnena said: "There's plenty of evidence that some men will take advantage of cubicles that are open top and bottom to spy on or film women."

Analysis by The Times found North Herts council approved a £16.3 million leisure centre programme on May 20 last year which included converting the wet changing area at North Herts Leisure Centre into a "change village".

Brighton and Hove council later backed a £6.88 million swimming pool at Withdean Sports Complex with what its design documents called a "unisex changing village", while a £22 million redevelopment of West Wickham Leisure Centre in Bromley included a unisex changing village.

Of the nine schemes examined by The Times, Brighton was the only one whose published design documents explicitly specified full-height cubicles.

A spokesperson for the council said: "The facilities proposed for the new pool at Withdean consist of individual and family lockable cubicles ... and follow design standards set out by Sport England."

At least six other councils, including Brentwood and Rochford in Essex, and Sevenoaks in Kent, approved or continued changing village projects after the judgment. The projects were worth about £54.8 million, although that figure included other facilities too.

Sport England said: "It is for facility operators and local authorities to ensure their services and facilities comply with relevant legislation." It is "reviewing and updating guidance".

All the councils were contacted for comment.

NHS stalls on new guidance for single-sex spaces

Bill Curtis
Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

The NHS has refused to set out a timeline for implementing the new legal code on protecting single-sex spaces.

Outdated rules allowing transgender patients to be treated in the gendered ward of their choosing remain in place, even though national guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission was released on Wednesday. NHS England said that new policies on single-sex spaces would be published "shortly".

Campaigners said the "prevarication" was insulting to patients and staff. Fiona McAnena, director of campaigns for Sex Matters, said: "The NHS has a duty to act now. It knows the law.

"NHS leaders should have acted when the law was clarified [by the Supreme Court] in April last year, and they have no reason to delay further."

An NHS England source suggested the delay was due to the Cabinet Office, which is "co-ordinating the response" to the guidance across government.

A Cabinet Office source said: "No one has been stopped from changing their policies; it's been the government's position that everyone should be updating their policies in line with the Supreme Court ruling and then using the code of practice to do so."

Bethany Hutchison, a nurse who led a successful claim against Darlington Memorial Hospital over a trans colleague using single-sex changing rooms, said the delay was "creating uncertainty for frontline NHS staff who are expected to make sensitive accommodation decisions every day".

An NHS spokesperson said: "The NHS will publish approved new guidance for the health service on single-sex accommodation shortly, in line with other public sector bodies."

Quintagram® No 2641

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Grind (one's teeth) forcefully (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Tied to the bank or jetty (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 Craving for water (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Highly respected in one's field (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Airport's rotary conveyor belt (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	C	D	E	E	E	E
G	H	H	I	I	L	M	M
N	N	N	O	O	O	R	R
R	S	S	S	T	T	T	U

Solutions see page 71
Cryptic clues see Review page 45

Swimming in medicine

Medicines wasted in England in one year could fill 75 swimming pools, pharmacies have said. The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) estimated that 3,400 tonnes worth of partially used medicines were disposed of in England in 2024-25. The NPA, using data from local health bodies, estimated the cost to the NHS at £480 million a year.

Gen Z take most photos

Britons take 1,040 photos and 312 videos per year on average, research shows. A poll of 2,000 adults by Samsung found that Gen Z take the most, averaging 39 photos and 17 videos per week, followed by millennials, who take 26 photos and seven videos. Forty-two per cent of people will sometimes spend time retouching their posts before sharing online.

Rape claims 'sickening'

Wes Streeting has said he is "sickened" by reports of rape and sexual abuse of female recruits at a military college. The defence secretary has faced calls for an inquiry after four women told the BBC they suffered sexual abuse and harassment at the Army Foundation College at Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The army said the reports were "unacceptable".

Madonna producer dies

The Grammy award-winning record producer William Orbit has died, aged 69. The London-born musician died at home on July 23. His family said he would be "greatly missed by us and by so many whose lives he touched". Orbit worked with artists such as Madonna, U2, Blur and Pink, and in his solo career he produced 12 mainly electronic studio albums.

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Cambridge to review how it hires academics

Dons call for an inquiry into Jason Arday's appointment, write **Georgia Lambert** and **Marieta Marinova**

University of Cambridge professors have called for an independent inquiry into how Jason Arday was appointed, criticising the university for "parading" him due to his race, youth and "transformative potential".

The academics wrote to the university calling for "root and branch reform" around the handling of misconduct allegations after the star professor resigned after revelations about his academic record.

It came as Cambridge announced a review into its appointment procedures for senior academics after accusations that Arday was selected for "media visibility" reasons rather than academic excellence.

Other senior academics suggested his 2023 appointment, making him the youngest black professor in Cambridge's history, was a "quick fix" to address the university's diversity issues.

Cambridge initially announced an investigation into Arday's academic qualifications and honorary appointments on Wednesday after previously refusing to be drawn into the fiasco.

As well as accusations surrounding plagiarism in his PhD thesis, Arday has been accused of fabrication in his academic work. His personal life has also come under scrutiny.

Yesterday, the university said its investigations would widen into a separate review into how senior academics are hired. The University of Glasgow, where Arday was a professor of sociology from 2022 to 2023, also announced a review into his appointment yesterday.

Arday, 41, was appointed by Cambridge after being selected by an independent panel of nine members, known as the board of electors, chaired by Baroness Morgan of Huyton. The Labour peer and master of Fitzwilliam College, who was a senior figure in Sir Tony Blair's government, has yet to comment, as has the rest of the panel.

Professor Hilary Cremin, head of the faculty of education and Arday's former boss, described him as "the best in the world" in his field in a BBC programme about his appointment.

During the programme, Arday addressed potential criticism that his appointment was "tokenistic". Cremin replied: "The board of electors on your interview day were absolutely unanimous. We are so lucky to have you."

Cremin, who did not sit on the panel, faced further scrutiny over how she responded when presented with evidence of Arday's alleged plagiarism in May 2023 by two academics.

The majority of those on the panel had carried out academic work that had, to varying degrees, touched upon diversity, decolonisation and institutional obstacles for ethnic minorities.

Professor Anoop Nayak, from Newcastle University, published an article last year to address how black and minority ethnic staff were "chronically underestimated" in the field of geography. The article described how the "roots and branches" of the subject were "bleached in whiteness". He added: "Little wonder that the question, 'Why isn't my professor black?' trended on social media, received national press coverage, and has been a subject of academic debate."

He concluded that "unsettling questions" around staff hires needed to be addressed if "Anglo-American geographers are serious about decolonizing".

Jason Arday said he ran run 30 marathons in 35 days. On the 21st he suffered from an epileptic fit and fractured his leg after falling. He finished the others

In a letter to the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Deborah Prentice, a group of senior academics pointed to the damage caused by the affair. Two of the signatories questioned whether Arday's appointment at a young age was influenced by subsequent focus on his incredible backstory.

The letter, shared with The Times, called on an independent panel to examine "the decisions and risk assessments made by the faculty of education and the university comms team when crafting a media narrative focusing on his youth, his race, and his transformative potential".

Nicholas Guyatt, professor of North American history and fellow at Jesus College, who is one of the organisers behind the letter, denied suggestions that race is a factor that had led to hires at Cambridge but questioned the "fanfare" after Arday's. "It's an incredibly difficult balance for a university to get it right between celebrating the appointment, particularly people that might be underrepresented within the institution, then turning those people into tokens or even "mascots"," he said.

Priyamvada Gopal, professor of postcolonial studies and one of the organisers of the letter, said: "Our concern is ... about what the institution that we work for, what missteps or mistakes it might have made."

Cambridge yesterday confirmed that it would continue to investigate circumstances around Arday's appointment and tenure.

Neither Morgan nor other panel members responded to a request for comment. Cremin could not be reached for comment.

Additional reporting: Mario Ledwith

Three appointment panellists

Anoop Nayak, professor of social and cultural geography, Newcastle University His research has focused on race, racism, whiteness, identity and belonging in Britain. His work examines how whiteness operates as a social category, how racial identities are constructed, and how experiences of racism shape everyday life. In recent research on academic geography and decolonisation, he argued that the discipline's historical "whiteness" and colonial foundations can "stymie" efforts to decolonise.

Louise Archer, professor of sociology of education, University College London A leading voice in educational equity. Her work focuses on complex identities and inequalities in social class, gender, race and ethnicity. She co-founded Athena Swan Charter, which helps to advance gender equality and create inclusive environments.

Michalinos Zembylas, professor of educational theory and curriculum studies, Open University of Cyprus His work covers emotion and affect in education, in relation to social justice, politics and decolonisation. In 2016, he received the distinguished researcher award in social sciences and humanities from the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation.

'I heard doctors write me off after a near-fatal car accident'

Ali Mitib, Mario Ledwith

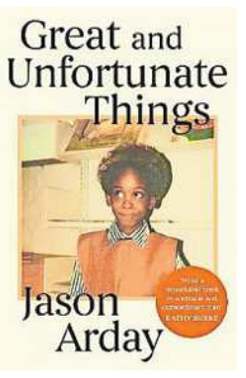
Professor Jason Arday claimed in a book proposal for his memoir to have had testicular cancer and locked-in syndrome and to have almost died in a car accident when he was a teenager.

In the document pitching his autobiography, obtained by The Times, the Cambridge academic said he had been left in a coma by a car accident.

According to his account, doctors recommended that he be taken off life support "as an act of mercy", but he was spared after his mother insisted that he was "going to do something with his life". Arday was able to report the episode because, he said, he had had locked-in syndrome, a rare neurological condition in which a person is physically paralysed but conscious.

The episode was omitted from the final version of his book, which is due to be released on Tuesday in the US and on August 27 in the UK. The 45-page proposal has raised more questions about Arday's life and professional achievements after he was accused of plagiarising his PhD thesis and exaggerating his athletic and fundraising feats.

Arday, 41, who became the university's youngest black professor when he was appointed professor of sociology of education at Cambridge in 2023, quit on Wednesday after the institution opened an investigation into his "academic qualifications and honorary appointments". Arday told The Times he denied allegations of academic fraud, saying he had made mistakes but was not a fantasist.



Professor Jason Arday's memoir will be released in the UK later this month

In the book proposal, he said his heart had stopped for two minutes after he was hit by a car shortly before his 16th birthday, and that he heard the doctor recommend he be taken off life support. "I was gravely injured and rushed to the hospital. My heart stopped for two minutes, and I was in a coma and on life support. The doctors told my parents, 'Even if he comes out of it, which we do not expect, he'll be in a vegetative state. We are trying to protect his brain by putting him in a coma, but unfortunately, his brain is not showing any signs of activity.'

"The doctors suggested that my parents consider taking me off of life support as an act of mercy. But my mum refused to accept what the doctors were telling them, [saying] 'I am telling you, this kid is going to do something with his life. We need to have faith.'"

Arday wrote that he had remained in a coma for nearly two and a half months while claiming that during that time he could hear everything because he had locked-in syndrome. He added that he then spent the next year relearning how to walk and talk.

The crash and its aftermath did not feature in Arday's memoir, *Great and Unfortunate Things*. The book describes how he dreaded the return to school at the start of his final year in secondary school, took his exams and failed all his GCSEs except for PE and textiles. He added that both subjects "had large practical components where I could at least contribute something".

Arday's proposal claimed that at the age of 34 he had had testicular cancer, a condition that is not mentioned in his book. However, the book does mention that he completed a PhD while suffering from a benign brain tumour, which was removed two weeks before his viva.

In the proposal, Arday wrote that a group of young people who attacked him and subsequently became his students were "four years older" than him. In the book, he says that "my attackers were all from south London and, like me, they were 18 — barely adults".

In his proposal, he wrote that in 2005 a "shaman woman" in South America, "well known in the area for predicting people's futures" had prophesied he was "destined for great and unfortunate things". In his book, he claims he was told of a prophecy by an aid worker in Brazil in 2006.

Arday and Simon & Schuster UK were approached for comment.

In a summer of strife, will Farage

Reform's leader faces many questions, write **Patrick Maguire**, **Oliver Wright**, **Geraldine Scott** and **Katy Balls**

A Reform UK campaign bus in Clacton, Essex, where Nigel Farage is facing a self-inflicted by-election on August 13. Left, Robert Jenrick, Reform UK's would-be

Summer has usually been a season of political opportunity for Reform UK. Small boat crossings rise in the good weather, ministers are on their sunbeds and the slower news agenda opens up the airwaves for eye-catching policies.

Last year Reform exploited this mercilessly, riding on a wave of dissatisfaction with the government to amplify its message and solidify its position as the most popular political party in Britain.

But this summer has proved trickier. In the Westminster bubble, at least, the aura of Reform's invincibility has slipped as Nigel Farage grapples with claims of financial scandals, a self-inflicted by-election in Clacton and an electoral threat on his right in the form of Restore Britain.

At the first of Reform's summer recess press conferences, Farage found himself grappling with questions not about his pledge to use the navy to deport Channel migrants, but about party donors and Rupert Lowe's Restore. "You could see a situation where Restore, literally without hope of winning a single seat in the country, could do us great harm," he admitted candidly.

But just as the Westminster consensus may have over-hyped Reform's rise — it is possible they are over-hyping its demise. Canvassing this week in Clacton, Farage was nearly knocked off his feet by the unselfconscious embrace of an elderly constituent, who exclaimed: "The holy grail is here!" The consituent added: "I think you're doing a fabulous job. Don't let the bastards drag you down. They're all out to get you." Unsurprisingly, Farage agreed. "I know," he said, as a Reform videographer captured the scene for social media.

Posts such as this one have formed a drumbeat of affirmation from Farage's accounts in recent weeks. It has been largely derided by the political mainstream, but those adoring voters in Clacton — or at least those who bother to turn out — look set to return to Farage to the Commons by a lopsided margin next Thursday, despite the newfound media ubiquity of the comedy provocateur Count Binface and unrelenting criticism from Reform's rivals.

A Survation poll in The Times this week showed that while 22 per cent intended to vote for Binface, Farage was still on course to win more than 70 per cent of the vote. Even in a hypothetical contest in which all of the main parties stood, more Clacton residents (57 per cent) said they would vote for Reform than in 2024.

Reform's return to first place in this week's YouGov poll for The Times has lifted his team's spirits. As one of them said: "Nigel is back."

After months of revelations over his and Reform's funding, Farage wants to use Clacton as a springboard back to the centre stage of the national debate. But questions remain about Reform and Farage's durability and how the party responds to the shifting political landscape. Looming stage right is Lowe, the former Reform MP and leader of Restore, the hard-right party Farage now denounces as a ballot spoiler that could block his path to No 10.

Last week, after the Greater Manchester mayoral election, Lowe made a surprising offer to Farage. He has emerged as Reform's most persistent critic since his suspension from the party in a row with Zia Yusuf over his personal conduct last year. Despite an ocean's worth of bad blood, he invited Reform to work with Restore, whose 8.7 per cent tally in Greater Manchester proved that the party is capable of winning votes and causing headaches.

It was the same story in Makerfield last month, when Farage said Restore were in part responsible for Reform's failure to defeat Andy Burnham. Polling bears this theory out. According to a YouGov survey for The Times this week, 49 per cent of voters said they had heard of Restore and knew at least something of its offer to the country.

But it is the views of Reform voters that reveal why the MP for Great Yarmouth has established himself as such an irritant for Farage. Among all voters, Lowe's policy prescriptions, from deporting all legal migrants living in Britain on benefits to a referendum on the death penalty, were more unpopular than popular. But when Reform supporters were asked for their view, each commanded more than 70 per cent backing.

Robert Jenrick has been trying to build up tacit political support for Reform in the United States. The party's would-be chancellor met JD Vance, the US vice-president, in Washington for talks that ran an hour. The pair discussed the state of British politics and defence spending.

The electoral threat from Restore is not that they could eclipse Reform, but that they could succeed in shaving away the part of Farage's coalition that thinks he has become too cautious or too Westminster-minded. That makes Farage's path to power much narrower. But, while a deal might be in Reform's electoral interests, within the party there is no expectation that it will be done.

Farage has shown "political resilience"

Farage wrote a long and ambiguous response to Lowe's appeal for co-operation that was careful to say neither yes nor no. But, just as his team expected, the tentative dialogue quickly devolved into a squabble over the precise wording of a text in which he had offered Lowe a phone call.

So while issues of personal enmity are some way past resolving, Reform's leadership believe the electoral arithmetic is not. Farage's statement was less directed at Lowe but Restore's voters.

So long as Reform can stay ahead of the Conservatives in the polls — even if second to Burnham's rejuvenated Labour — Farage's strategists believe that they can squeeze the votes of other parties on the right. However, just how many Tory voters would be willing to do so remains to be seen. Asked by YouGov who they would least like to be prime minister after the next election, 26 per cent of Tory supporters said Farage and only 12 per cent said Burnham.

Reform insiders have argued that most election results show the Conservatives are in a death spiral in most of Britain. On the night the Tories won the Aberdeen South by-election, they were reduced to barely 2 per cent of the vote in Makerfield. The next month, they fifth in Greater Manchester.

Still, this has not stopped some willing a return to the old political order into existence. Coverage of Reform's funding has made some businesses rethink their level of engagement with the party.

One industry source said that some firms were debating whether or not to send representatives to Reform's conference in September. From the party's headquarters comes a very different message: this year's conference will be its biggest yet. This week Yusuf spoke of a "record number of incoming calls" to its business engagement team.

Regardless of who is right, some in Reform believe there have been missteps in recent months. One source said they believed Farage had been poorly advised over calling the Clacton by-election. They said that "young advisers" around Farage had not checked whether the standards' commissioner's investigation would continue in the event of the by-election and had incorrectly assumed it would not. They also criticised "massive salaries" paid to staff who were "letting Nigel down".

But Gawain Towler, a longtime Farage ally and a member of the party's board, said reports of Farage's demise had all been proved wrong before.

He said: "I'm reading Ashcroft's biography of Farage right now, mainly because I'm in it, of course, but what I found, I just got to the point of 2007, I remember it well. The BNP, a party on our right, was cutting into our votes. Farage looked tired. There were a couple of questions about propriety and about finances. There were people in, the head of UKIP asking, is it the end of Nigel Farage? This was 2007.

"His political obituaries, have been written time and time and time again. If you want to see an example of resilience, political resilience, then you look no further than Nigel Farage."

prove the critics wrong again?

TOLGA AKMEN/EPA

chancellor, met JD Vance, the US vice-president, for an hour in Washington

Miliband's net zero plans put on back burner

Continued from page 1

relaxations of the rules. It been lobbied by motor manufacturers who argue the mandate is too tough. The measures suggested include lowering the 2030 mandate to 70, 60 or even 50 per cent.

The consultation will also look a more flexibility for manufacturers who fail to meet the thresholds. A source said there was a "recognition" that demand for electric vehicles had not matured as had been expected when the framework was devised.

Tanya Sinclair, the chief executive of Electric Vehicles UK, accused manufacturers of spending "more time complaining about demand than creating it". She said: "Car manufacturers are among the biggest and most sophisticated marketers in the world ... They know better than most that demand doesn't just appear, it is built.

"If everyone spent half as much time building consumer demand as they do arguing over percentages, we would be much closer to a fully electric future."

Figures released this week by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders showed that 43,106 new battery electric cars were registered last month, a 27.5 per cent market share. Some 62,799 petrol cars were registered, accounting for 40 per cent, and 23,359 plug-in hybrids, accounting for 14.9 per cent.

So far this year, battery electric cars have accounted for 25.3 per cent of registrations, well short of the 33 per cent ZEV requirement. Petrol cars continue to be most popular, accounting for 42.8 per cent of registrations.

Since taking over from Miliband, Fahnbulleh has signalled that she will take a new approach to areas such as North Sea oil and gas while keeping the thrust of Labour's net zero policies.

Some in Whitehall have been concerned that prices may be inflated by Labour's "mission". Industry projections suggest that energy bills will rise by £50 to £100 by the end of the decade as the capital cost of building renewable power sources and upgrading the electricity grid are passed on.

Fahnbulleh said that mission remained and, in the longer term, would bring down bills by decoupling from the volatile gas market.

Saturday Interview, pages 36-37

The show is back on in Clacton — but this time it feels a little bit different

Ferris wheels still turn but has the Reform revolution ground to a halt, asks **Tom Peck**

Being an Essex boy, I have a lot of friends with tales to tell about childhood holidays in Clacton-on-Sea. I don't have any such tales, we used to go to Devon. But these days, should the subject come up, I can reminisce about Clacton with the very best of them.

I discovered the place rather later in life, but for the past decade or so, rarely more than a couple of years have been allowed to pass before I'm summoned back to its sunny pier head, and always for the same reason: Nigel Farage.

Whenever there's a big plot point in the rolling, live-action Farage biopic, the world must return to Clacton. I can now complete the walk from the station to the seafront, past the fish and chip shops, tattoo parlours and vape stores entirely on instinct, like a sea turtle returning to its birthing grounds.

In October 2014, Ukip won a by-election here. Back then, if you wanted to defect from the Tories to the Farage cause, it was considered democratically essential to hold a by-election. These days, the big man takes a slightly different view, as half of his parliamentary party and "shadow cabinet" can attest.

Since then there have been European elections and general elections, and each time Farage must return to Clacton, to his people, with whom he has demonstrably nothing in common.

This time, it feels different. To gaze up at the road bridge over the boardwalk at the bottom of Clacton Pier, it feels hard to believe that, just two years ago, Farage literally stopped traffic up there. He was standing on a photographer's step ladder at the bottom of the ferris wheel, and people were getting out of their cars just to lap up the words that were being growled into his megaphone.

There was a sense that, together, Farage and Clacton were going to make history. But more recently, the wheels of revolution seem like they might be grinding to a halt. The day-tripping families heading down to the seafront, beach paraphernalia hanging off pushchairs, don't even bother to gaze up at the teal-coloured open top bus parked in the taxi rank outside the station. "I'm with Nigel," it says on the back, but there's no one onboard.

More than once, I've narrowly avoided decapitation by overhanging tree branches on that thing. I've even ridden on its top deck up the M1, which, somewhat remarkably, is legal. But this is not a vintage moment in its history.

What's happening this time is a Farage power play. It's an attempt to steal a march on the parliamentary standards commissioner. He wants to make the commissioner look ridiculous, should he choose to force a by-election on him, because there will have already been one, because he called it.

But it's not quite going to plan. Instead, in the immortal words of Rachel Reeves, Farage is "spending his summer arguing with a bin". And, according to the latest polling, several thousand adult human beings really are going to choose to cast their vote for a Radio 4 comedy writer with a bin on his head.

Reform UK is still calling it the "People vs the Establishment" by-election, but what's actually happening is an almost perfect recreation of the Monty Python election night sketch. It's not just Count Binface. The Monster Raving Loony Party is fielding three candidates. In total, 34 people are standing.

It's hard to tell if the people of Clacton have been made to feel silly by it all. On a cloudless afternoon, in an August heatwave, in what is still a holiday destination, there aren't that many of them around. Paul Cross, who is 51 and has just emerged from a bar on the seafront, where he's bought a pint of lager in the company of a life-size cardboard cut-out of Jeremy Clarkson, makes clear that he voted for Farage last time and he will do so again.

"I like him," he says. "He's the only one who gets it. Apart from him, they're all the same"

I point out that they're not quite all the same, given the rival candidate is a time-travelling space lord with a dustbin for a face. "You lot think it's hilarious don't you," he says. "But we're only having this election because the media have got it in for Nigel."

I try to point out that it's not so much the media as the independent commissioner on parliamentary standards, but Cross is having none of it. "It's a stitch up, it's an establishment stitch up."

That it's Nigel against the world is a commonly shared sentiment. "Course I'm voting Reform," said Deborah Burns, on her way into Peacock's, just off the precinct. "Nigel Farage makes us all feel proud of Clacton," Burns said.

It's unfortunate that her pride is barely audible beneath the shouting of a middle-aged woman, under the influence of who knows what, who is hurling the very worst kind of abuse at passers-by. While families eat their fish and chip lunches, F and C-bombs are exploding around them like it's the opening scenes of *Saving Private Ryan*.

But there are Binface fans to be found. In the past few weeks, a few Clacton residents and a few Clacton businesses have reached out to the Count, and have been graced with a visit, all the way from his home planet of Sigma IX. Count Binface has placed a hi-viz tabard over the shoulders of his space robes at City Plumbing, and a kind lady at the Love Your Feet podiatry clinic in neighbouring Frinton has even attempted a pedicure on his intergalactic space boots.

Count Binface said the people of Clacton had been very friendly

"I love the people of Clacton," the Count told me. "They've been very friendly. Top-drawer humans, the lot of them." He has, he says, "enjoyed vaporising and gaseously inhaling the cod and chips at the Hook of Clacton fish bar."

These are, of course, busy times for men with bins on their heads who stand in by-elections for fun. Makerfield was not yet two months ago. "I'm only 5,902 years old," he said. "For a Recyclon that's nothing, and I've got plenty of space fuel left in the tank. But if you're asking me if I'd like human politicians to spread out their by-election meltdowns just a bit, yes that would be lovely."

Traditionally, Clacton becomes the centre of national attention when something significant is happening, but the Clacton by-election of 2026 is not significant.

Twelve years ago, my brilliant colleague Matthew Parris came here and argued that the Tory Party should have the courage to turn their back on places like this, and embrace instead the future, not the past. He was entirely right in that assessment but the passage of time since has had other ideas. Now, politics appears to be a race to placate Clacton man. We have become a country that ties disposable Union Jack party decorations to our lampposts and intimidates anyone who dares to suggest that these now colourless, lifeless rags are not an improvement to the public realm.

Farage will surely win, and the result won't reveal much either. In 2024, whether or not he would win Clacton was a genuine debate. Now the debate is whether he will become prime minister. As such, this by-election is not well calibrated to measure very much at all.

In the right conditions, Clacton almost passes for beautiful. British families pay a lot of money to board easyJet flights to the Costa del Sol, or the Canary Islands, and sit on crescents of soft sand a lot less spectacular than this one. You also won't find anywhere in Spain with anywhere near as many British-themed pubs. In the right conditions, Clacton is everything Benidorm aspires to be.

Along the front, there are a series of Martello Towers, giant stone pillboxes built to defend the Essex and Suffolk coastline from the threat of Napoleonic invasion. On Thursday night, they were powerless against Count Binface's laser beam.

Could he do it? Probably not. But what if he did? "Well," he says. "It would reinforce the fact while Britain may be struggling economically, it still leads the world in the important skill of taking the piss."

Taking the piss out of Clacton is nothing new. Farage has been at it for years.

Hey, hope you're doing well! I'm taking part in a community initiative promoting positive change and respectful conversations. I'd really appreciate your vote to help amplify a voice focused on the greater good. Here's the link: fiestalonia.afgo.top 3m

Thérèse Coffey's X account hacked by crypto scammers

Baroness Coffey has become the latest politician to fall victim to social media hacking (Ben Clatworthy writes).

The former Tory minister's X account was compromised on Thursday night and a photoshopped image of her standing beside a black Rolls-Royce Ghost car was posted. It said: "This August has given me so much to be grateful for. I started the year with a vision of getting a new car, and today I'm standing here with it. It's an amazing feeling to see that goal become a reality. Grateful for the support of @kareem_zoya you made this possible."

The link to "kareem_zoya" directed users to a locked profile of a "digital entrepreneur" dealing in cryptocurrency trading.

The post was deleted and reposted yesterday with August changed to July. The car in the picture is real and was recently sold second-hand on Autotrader.

Spam messages were also sent to users who are followed by Coffey, who was elevated to the House of Lords by the Conservative leader, Kemi Badenoch last year. One read: "Hey, hope you're doing well! I'm taking part in a community initiative promoting positive change and respectful conversations. I'd really appreciate your vote to help amplify a voice focused on the greater good." It was accompanied by a malicious hyperlink.

Alex Greenland, a cybersecurity expert, wrote on X: "Thérèse Coffey ... has had her X account hacked. The threat actor is sending messages to her followers with scam voting links to phish you and steal your X account. Do not click on links from Thérèse. Always verify links with a good link-checker."

Link-checker tools help users avoid dangerous sites online, including fake websites, malware-hosting pages, scams and spam.

Some Westminster politicians and journalists were victims of hacking this year, with messages sent to followers asking for votes in a fake podcast competition. Nadhim Zahawi, the former chancellor, was also hacked with scammers posting about get-rich-quick scheme, including a screenshot of a fake bank account with more than £20,000 in the current account.

Thérèse Coffey
@theresecoffey
This July has given me so much to be grateful for. I started the year with a vision of getting a new car, and today I'm standing here with it. It's an amazing feeling to see that goal become a reality. Grateful for the support of @kareem_zoya you made this possible.

The hacker of Thérèse Coffey's X account posted a photo of the baroness smiling next to a Rolls-Royce. The fake post was updated to change the month, top centre, and spam messages were sent to people the politician follows

Miliband blocked in bid to lead Brexit reset

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Ed Miliband has been rebuffed after he was accused of a Whitehall landgrab in order to take oversight of the Brexit reset negotiations.

The foreign secretary raised eyebrows last month after letting it be known that he wanted to play a "greater role" in Britain's Brexit renegotiation than previous foreign secretaries.

He accepted an invitation to attend an informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Brussels and was quickly out of the blocks to meet his counterparts in Paris and Madrid.

But his positioning was seen by some in the Cabinet office, which previously had responsibility for the Brexit reset talks under Sir Keir Starmer, as an unwelcome landgrab and it quickly moved to have him put back in his box.

"It has been made very clear to Ed that he is responsible for the rest of the world — but the EU is not his job even if he might want it to be," said a Cabinet Office source.

Questions over Miliband's influence were raised after Andy Burnham sacked Nick Thomas-Symonds, the previous Brexit minister, who was an ally of Starmer and had responsibility for EU relations. Thomas-Symonds was based in the Cabinet Office and led a team of senior officials who were in charge of the technical talks with Brussels.

Burnham replaced Thomas-Symonds with Hamish Falconer, but gave him slightly different responsibilities. Instead of being solely based in the Cabinet Office, he was appointed jointly as a minister in the Foreign Office and technically reports to Miliband.

One source claimed that Miliband saw this an opportunity to take greater control over the Brexit process and potentially bring back responsibility for the EU into the Foreign Office, something officials in the department have long wanted.

But a senior government source said this was definitely not on the cards and this had been made clear to Miliband. They said: "Falconer is solely responsible for the reset negotiations and reports only to the prime minister on this."

A source close to Miliband denied that he had designs on the role. "Hamish definitely in charge of negotiations but Ed is involved in aligning this work with the wider UK's foreign policy objectives," they said.

There is wider concern in government that Burnham has used his first few weeks in power to focus on the domestic agenda, rather than continue with his predecessor's diplomatic outreach.

The EU summit, which is due to agree a youth mobility scheme and an end to checks on food crossing the Channel, is not expected to take place before November at the earliest. The summit was expected to take place last month, but was postponed by Brussels after Starmer announced he was standing down.

One European source said they did not know whether Burnham and Falconer would continue to pursue Starmer's demands that the youth mobility scheme be capped and European students pay full overseas tuition fees.

Another Labour source said the talks had gone "backwards" over the summer and Burnham would need to "seriously engage" in September. They said: "He has just not engaged with it so far and that is going to have to change."

Miliband is said to believe that whoever is in charge of negotiations with Brussels needs to see them in the broader context of Britain's relationship with its European allies.

"These things have to be aligned across government and that is what he hopes to do," said a source close to the foreign secretary. "But that is not the same as leading the negotiations with Brussels which has never been his job."

Ed Miliband had an invitation to a meeting in Brussels

Sturgeon was 'blindest wife ever', says Rowling

Marc Horne

JK Rowling has reopened her feud with Nicola Sturgeon, accusing her of being a "world-class misogynist" and disloyal to her SNP comrades.

The Harry Potter author and the former first minister have long traded terse exchanges over issues of sex and gender.

In 2022, Rowling posted a selfie on social media in which she wore a T-shirt with the words: "Nicola Sturgeon, destroyer of women's rights." It was a response to Sturgeon's attempt as first minister to make it easier for people to legally change their gender without a medical diagnosis.

Extracts from a new foreword to the paperback edition of Sturgeon's memoir were published yesterday in which she accused Peter Murrell, her ex-husband, who has been sentenced to five years and three months in prison for embezzling £400,000 from the SNP, of subjecting her to "suspicion, humiliation and vilification".

She also accused John Swinney, the first minister and her former deputy, of running an election campaign that lacked "vision or big-picture thinking". Swinney won the Holyrood election in May but fell short of the results Sturgeon had achieved in 2016 and 2021.

Rowling responded on X, writing: "I'm astonished that Sturgeon turns out to be not only a world-class misogynist, the blindest wife ever to enjoy the fruits of a fraudster husband's theft, but also profoundly disloyal to the party and the political allies who once revered her." Rowling donated £1 million to the campaign to keep Scotland in the UK in the 2014 referendum.

Rowling has said in the past that her intention in wearing the T-shirt was to encourage journalists to "confront" her on gender issues. Sturgeon said the intervention had made her feel "at risk of possible physical harm", adding: "It seemed to me to be quite incendiary."

Sturgeon later expressed regret that she had not paused gender self-ID legislation to seek common ground between supporters and critics when the issue became mired in "rancour and division". She told ITV News: "We'd lost all sense of rationality in this debate. I'm partly responsible for that."

Rowling alleged on her website that Sturgeon had presided over a culture in which women who did not subscribe to her "luxury beliefs" were silenced, shamed, persecuted and put in unsafe and degrading situations.

JK Rowling also accused the former first minister of being disloyal to her political allies

She said of Sturgeon's memoir: "She is flat out Trumpian in her shameless denial of reality and hard facts."

Sturgeon said that "forces on the far right" had sought to weaponise the trans issue to push back on rights generally. She has also said: "Where does she [Rowling] get the time to obsess about me? I hate to tell her that it's just not reciprocated."

The Gender Recognition Reform Bill was passed at Holyrood with the support of the SNP, Labour, the Greens and the Liberal Democrats, but blocked by the Conservative UK government.

Sturgeon has maintained that she was unaware of her husband's crimes.

She has been asked to comment.

Peter Kirk has over 700 vines in Towthorpe, outside York and he now sells 40 bottles a month. Robin Foote recorded his wine producing exploits on the Instagram site Chateau Peckham

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

Hot weather leads to grape expectations all over Britain

A bumper crop of amateur viticulturists are defying the doubters, even in Yorkshire, writes **Ed Halford**

As a true Yorkshireman, it was the doubters that spurred Peter Kirk into action. "You'll never grow grapes and make wine in Yorkshire," friends told him when he sought inspiration online.

Now, as parts of England feel more like central France in the summer months, Kirk is one of a growing number of amateur winemakers harvesting grapes in their own back gardens or nearby smallholdings.

He runs his own "micro-vineyard" in Towthorpe just outside York. Having begun with 300 vines he now has 700. Without any staff, Kirk's vineyard has gradually grown from a hobbyist size to a small commercial one on three-quarters of an acre, and after trading for only two months he sells around 40 Towthorpe bottles a month.

For the past year, friends and family have helped out with day-to-day tasks and they chip in during harvest time. Kirk is not surprised the warmer weather has encouraged others to plant their own vines, as he said the sunshine had made a "massive difference". "The heat's great because it kick-starts the vines," Kirk said. In Yorkshire there are 16 commercial vineyards and about eight hobby vineyards, and Kirk expects more to follow.

The most recent data from the Food Standards Agency showed that in 2025 there were 779 commercial vineyards and 90 hobby vineyards — 5.8 per cent and 4.7 per cent increases respectively from the previous year.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) revealed that analysis of its website traffic found that there has been a 18.8 per cent increase in interest in the outdoor cultivation of grapes compared with last year, and a decrease of 5.3 per cent of interest in gardeners seeking information concerning the indoor cultivation of grapes compared with last year.

Guy Barter, the RHS chief horticulturist, told The Times that "people buy vines in winter and spring if they are wise and vines take a couple of years to come into useful crop".

However, Barter believes that "after recent long hot summers we could be looking at a cottage wine industry in the south at least in the next year or so".

Wine enthusiasts are also taking advantage of the heat in cities. Robin Foote, 40, an architect who first grew vines on an allotment in Bath, has moved to Coulsdon in Croydon where he plans to plant 60 vines in his garden. Foote said his decision to make wine began with an ambition to create a homemade Christmas gift. "I've done a few courses, including one at Plumpton College," Foote said.

While living in Peckham, Foote set up an Instagram page, Chateau Peckham, to showcase his wine exploits, including foot-crushing grapes. Foote said recent weather was "conducive for growing" but wants to prepare his soil for planting next spring. "The soil has also been sent to a lab for analysis so I can choose the correct rootstocks for my vines as some rootstocks do not tolerate certain soil conditions," he added.

Dr Caroline Gilby, 62, a wine writer with home-growing experience, said: "The UK's warmer than it was and in terms of wine it has definitely benefited from climate change. If I think back to English wines from the Seventies to what they are now, the best sparklings particularly are world class, which back in the day wasn't at all possible."

Gilby advised choosing varieties with a "relatively short growing season" and grapes that "can cope with our damp climate, which is a great enemy to growing healthy fruit".

"If it's damp you get rot and then you can't make good wine," she added, suggesting early-ripening pinot noir, chardonnay, or climate-resilient hybrids.

Nicola Bates, the chief executive of the WineGB trade association, said: "Hobbyists really kick-started the UK wine sector all the way back in the Fifties. Some of those vineyards turned into thriving commercial ventures. WineGB continues to support those who are just starting their journey, and our networks and guidance help these passionate enthusiasts to make the wines from their back gardens and allotments."

Gilby's top tips for growing grape vines at home

- Variety. Something early ripening to avoid our "usual" cold, damp autumns. Pinot noir, pinot meunier or chardonnay popular in the UK, especially for bubbly. If you like sauvignon, bacchus is good for similar style that copes with climate better. For something disease-resistant to avoid spraying fungicides — a hybrid-like seyval blanc or rondo, or new German Piwi grapes.
- Rain. Too much makes it hard to grow healthy fruit (grapes are prone to grey rot and mildew). Too little you will have to water your vine till it's established.
- Frost risk. Vines are cold-resistant when dormant, but late frosts after shoots appear are disastrous. Avoid frost pockets. Stick to slopes for air drainage or grow against wall for shelter and maximum warmth.
- Definitely making wine? Most wine grapes are not good for eating. Not sure, choose madeleine angevine or siegerrebe.
- Winemaking. There's long tradition of homemade wine in Europe, but it's hard to make wine as good as the professional stuff. You will have to invest in equipment, be able to control temperature, and be scrupulous about hygiene.

Couple who saved D-Day landings boat will sail it to Normandy

Lowri Lewis

A boat used in the D-Day landings has been renovated by a couple who spent £200,000 on the vessel and now intend to take it on the same journey it made in the Second World War.

The 72ft boat, Sarinda, which served in the Normandy landings, was rotting when Simon Robins saw it for sale on eBay. He suggested to his wife Gemma that they buy it for £6,000 and renovate it. She eventually agreed.

The couple, from Wrexham in Wales, who were running a campervan renovation business, have now saved Sarinda from the scrapheap.

They plan to make the voyage to Normandy on the 85th anniversary of D-Day in 2029.

Sarinda acted as a navigation leader and unloaded soldiers onto Gold Beach in the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944. Originally named Harbour Defence Motor Launch 1392 (ML 1392), it was also tasked with clearing the way of any mines.

It was refurbished into a luxury motor yacht in the 1970s but still features boards and bolts from its historic wartime voyage.

Robins, 46, saw the relic and proposed giving it a new lease of life, but Gemma, 40, said: "I said, we don't need a 72-foot rotting boat. That's not what we need in our lives right now."

They bought it after Gemma looked into its history and fell in love with the backstory.

The couple have spent the past five years renovating the boat with the help of their children, documenting the work on social media.

Simon and Gemma Robins bought the boat on eBay and spent £200,000 on renovations. The couple plan to sail the same route the Sarinda took when used in the Normandy D-Day landings

Gemma said: "Without people saving these historic boats, there's none left. There were 464 of these built and worldwide, now there's four. One just got scrapped in New Zealand. If it was a plane from World War Two, it would be in a museum, wouldn't it?"

Renovations include the installation of a porcelain-white deck, removing and repairing the roof and the refurbishment of the aft deck.

Enthusiasts from around the world have come to see it — some came from Australia, and visitors from America even offered to help rebuild it.

The couple's children Mason, 18, and Emilia, 15, have helped. Simon said: "When they were young, we used to drag them along. They're not bothered anymore, unfortunately." They plan to "travel the world" to make the boat "earn her keep".

Its sister ship, HMS Medusa (ML 1387) , is based in Portsmouth and remains in its original wartime configuration including guns. Its qwner Alan Watson has been a long-distance mentor for the Robins family — and the boats may even travel in convoy.

News

Teens hack government because it's 'stupid easy'

Bill Curtis

Teenage hackers who stole sensitive information from three government departments and the police have said it was "stupid easy".

The founder of ExfilSquad, an emergent cybercriminal group, said it exposed nearly 750,000 pieces of information for "fun", adding that most of its members were normal "teenagers living with our parents, going to school".

Speaking over an encrypted app, Lewis, the group's founder (not his real name), compared basic security errors in government databases to "simply opening the drawer of a filing cabinet" to read its contents.

Last week the Department for Education had 607,000 data pieces compromised, including details from head teachers. Then, on Monday, it was revealed that the group breached the police national legal database. The details of more than 100,000 police officers and staff were put on the dark web, alongside data from the Ministry of Defence and Home Office.

"Most of us are still teenagers living with our parents," Lewis said. "I am normal, apart from having an affinity for hacking and extorting companies."

Thalha Jubair, left, and Owen Flowers were jailed for five years each in July

He added: "A lot of teens are drawn to hacking because it feels like a game — you get recognition, a sense of identity, community and a lot of power."

The group had not expected the government to pay a ransom because of its longstanding policy against negotiating with cybercriminals. Instead, he said the attacks were intended to build ExfilSquad's reputation.

"We do it for fun and exposure. We dislike LE [law enforcement] and the government, so getting under their skin is enjoyable," Lewis said.

However, ExfilSquad's recent attacks, in their view, were simple because the datasets were left online without any security. The information leaked on to the dark web was stored using Microsoft's Power Pages software, which organisations use to build public-facing websites and online forms.

If it is set up incorrectly, data that should only be accessible to authorised users can instead be viewed or downloaded by anyone who knows where to look. While it is legally classed as hacking, it requires little to no coding.

Lewis said: "Neither [the police nor Department for Education were] ever on our radar as a target. They were caught in the sweep of a broader campaign against insecure Power Pages data tables. Once we had their data, we leaked it for the publicity and out of our severe distaste for law enforcement. We never demanded a ransom, knowing neither would ever pay.

"Our hack was stupid easy. It shows incompetence. Anyone affected should be notified as soon as possible. We actually urge anyone affected by our hacks to file lawsuits against the companies."

Warning of future attacks, he said: "The data could be accessed without any authentication. A simple analogy is a filing cabinet in an office where one drawer had been left unlocked and accessible from outside the building."

In a report this year, ministers acknowledged 28 per cent of government technology was "estimated to be legacy technology, and therefore highly vulnerable to attack". The Cyber Action Plan said GovAssure, the government's cyberassessment programme, had found "significant gaps in departments' cybersecurity and resilience".

Lewis rejected the idea that hacking systems resembled the Hollywood image of people in hoodies surrounded by glowing computer screens,

"The reality is that the recon work leading up to it had been going on for weeks, identifying systems that were exposed or vulnerable. By the time we reached that point, the only step left was simply triggering the process that collected the data."

Data from the National Crime Agency showed one in five children aged 10 to 16 had engaged in illegal behaviours that violated the Computer Misuse Act, which criminalised unauthorised access to computer systems and data. The figure was higher for those who gamed, at one in four.

The agency said that many offenders participating in low-level cybercrime, such as illegally downloading software, were unaware that their actions were criminal but could progress to participate in more complex, serious offending after a short period of time.

Last month two men were sentenced for launching a cyberattack on Transport for London that cost tens of millions of pounds in losses and inconvenienced thousands of passengers. Thalha Jubair, 20, from east London, and Owen Flowers, 18, from the West Midlands, were part of the group Scattered Spider and jailed for more than five years each. The group was also behind attacks on Marks & Spencer and the Co-op last year, which cost the supermarkets close to £350 million.

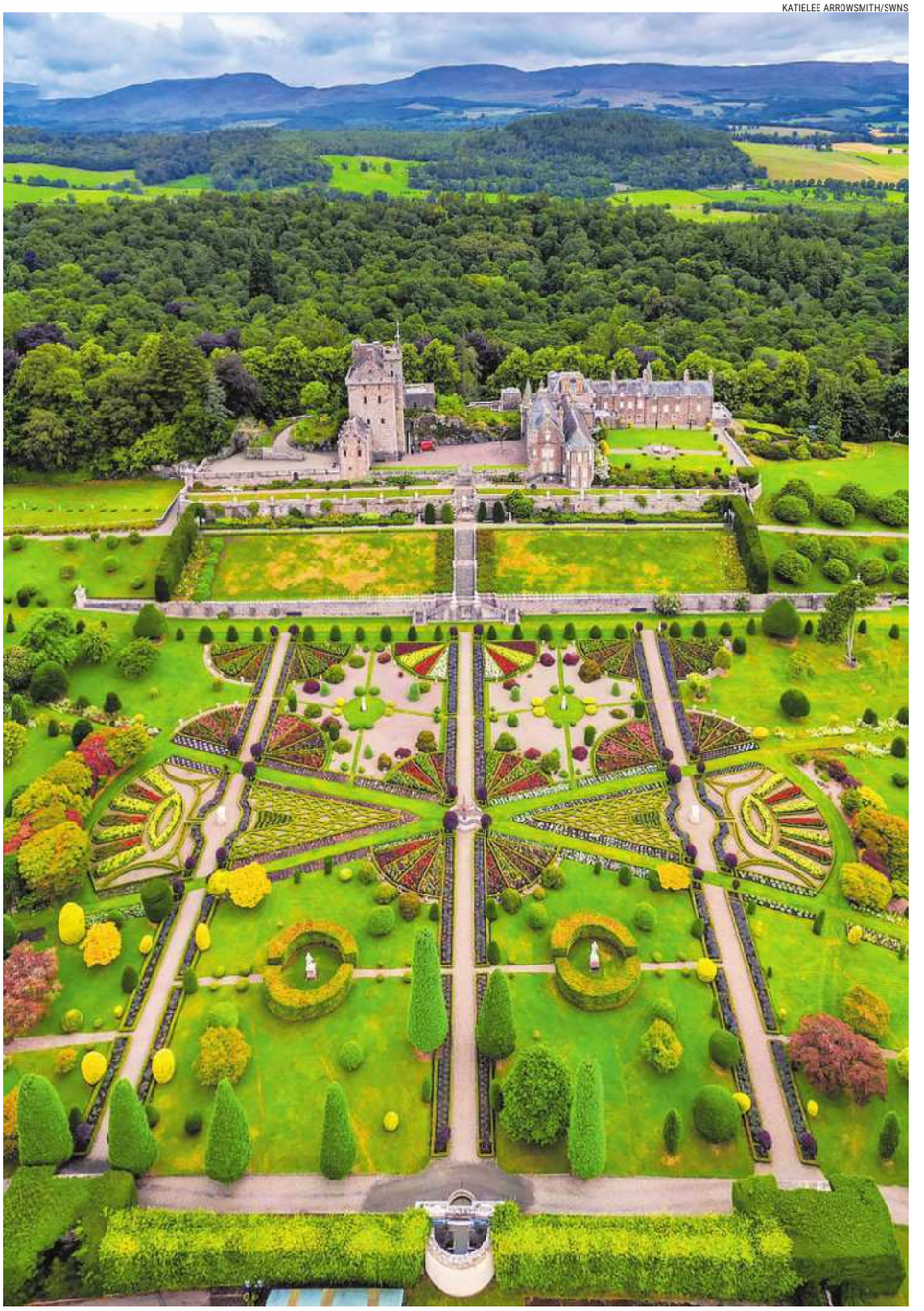
Jake Moore, global security adviser at Eset, a leading cybersecurity company, said the fact that teenagers could leak government files on the dark web shows why the Treasury needed to increase funding to protect official databases.

He said: "Government organisations are being seen as softer targets because they have not invested enough to properly protect private information."

While specific figures are not published, it is thought Whitehall spends no more than £2 billion a year on cybersecurity across all government departments, while some of the world's largest corporations, such as banks, each spend about £750 million to more than £1 billion a year protecting their own systems.

"They don't care about you," Lewis said. "They care about saving money."

KATIELEE ARROWSMITH/SWNS



Riot of colour The elaborate gardens of Drummond Castle, near Crieff in Perthshire, are now in full bloom and will be open to the public until October. They were used to stand in for the Palace of Versailles in the TV series Outlander

Defence chief in Ukraine's kill zone

Charlie Parker

The head of the British armed forces has revealed that he travelled close to the "kill zone" in Ukraine and watched Russian soldiers being hunted down by drones.

Sir Rich Knighton, chief of the defence staff, wrote in an article about his "first-hand" account of seeing Ukrainian troops engaged in "fierce" fighting.

During a visit to the war-torn country a few weeks ago, he travelled to the frontline headquarters of Ukraine's 425th Assault Regiment, where the battle for the eastern city of Pokrovsk was being fought from computer screens.

The countryside command post, consisting of half a dozen rooms in a civilian building northwest of the city, was bristling with digital maps "and live feeds from drones flying over the town".

"These drones were being used to look for the enemy, to attack enemy positions and to destroy other drones," Knighton said, adding that screens also displayed footage from hacked Russian feeds. "In some cases, the grainy pictures on the screens were in fact the intercepted signals from Russian drones, a real-time window to the battle."

The soldiers in the base were young men who had been fighting for Ukraine since the start of the war in February 2022. They had been civilians, painters, decorators and van drivers.

Knighton described their commander as "a bear of a man, with biceps bigger than my thighs and with scars on his face from the battles he had fought".

He was transported in an unmarked car by the Ukrainians from the Unmanned Systems Force to a secret location a little further from the front line, which is a 30km wide and 1,200km long "kill zone" saturated with deadly drones. Inside their makeshift headquarters large television screens were stacked one on top of the other, four or five high against the wall. He saw livestreams of drones being operated at longer ranges, across many kilometres of the front line in the Donetsk region "as they hunted their enemy". He said: "When the pilots weren't flying, they were sleeping or resting in sleep pods outside the ops room."

When awake, however, their attacks were recorded from the drone's camera and uploaded on an internal feed. Each was assessed and the results posted on a large screen in the centre of the wall.

He explained: "If the claimed kill is confirmed, it is added to the running total of Russians killed that day, week and month. The total increased by eight in the two hours I was in the building."

Knighton's detailed remarks were published in by the Heywood Quarterly this week to illustrate "the changes that technology is enabling in the way war is fought today".

Knox's quirky earnestness is sincere but not standup

Comedy Dominic Maxwell

Amanda Knox: Cartwheel
Gilded Balloon
Edinburgh
★★☆☆☆

ANDREW PERRY

Amanda Knox does not make fun of "rape and murder" as critics suggested in her solo show, a stilted attempt to convey the aftershocks of the death of Meredith Kercher in Italy in 2007

First things first: whatever you think of Amanda Knox's Edinburgh Fringe debut, which started its controversial run at the Gilded Balloon last night, you are unlikely to think it is really a comedy show at all. Maybe Knox billed it as that to explain some of the gallows-humour quips she bungs into the story of her life before and after the events in Italy in 2007 that led to her being arrested, imprisoned, convicted then finally acquitted of the murder of Meredith Kercher.

"You think an Italian boyfriend is possessive?" she asks. "Try being in an abusive relationship with the entire Italian state." She relays her story in a mocked-up child's bedroom, with occasional, slightly over-cute recorded interjections from her four-year-old daughter Eureka.

"Getting pregnant was easy because I'm used to getting screwed," she says. Back in her awful heyday, she suggests, she went from being loved by everyone who knew her — quite a claim — to hated by everyone who didn't. "I was like human haggis."

Written down, these gags might have slightly more jeu d'esprit than Knox, 39, gives them on stage. An author and podcaster these days, she's no fool, can spin a decent line, but holds the room with ... more pauses... than make for a merry mood. So this is an oblique, semi-theatrical one-woman show rather than anything approaching standup. She neither assumes we know her full story nor assumes we don't.

Maybe she's done with explaining, but we need to know the terrain better to know how to react. Knox mentions her young mother — divorced with two girls while still in her early twenties — forbidding her to get married before she turned 30. "It was my first time being coerced into a legally binding contract." A joke that only pops if you are up on what happened in Italy.

So do Kercher's sister, Stephanie, and the more than 10,000 people who signed a petition to stop Cartwheel being performed have a point? Really, no: not only does Knox not make fun of "rape and murder" as suggested, she only mentions her friend fairly briefly, and very earnestly. Kercher's name, for good or for ill, doesn't get mentioned until halfway through the hour.

But there's no getting round it: the effect of all this quirky earnestness is as disorientating as it is revealing. She needed a director. The audience were quiet but a few leapt to their feet at the end, prompting happy tears from Knox. Undeserved infamy must be a terrible thing to live with. This show is a sincere yet stilted attempt to convey aftershocks of events she treats more obliquely than sensationalistically, let alone facetiously.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, Edinburgh, to Aug 17, edfringe.com

Storm brewing among weather presenters as cuts bite at BBC

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

BBC Weather presenters including Tomasz Schafernaker and Louise Lear are eyeing the exit as the broadcaster seeks to cut costs and make its coverage more digital.

Schafernaker, Lear and Darren Bett, who have a total of more than 86 years of presenting experience between them, are understood to be considering taking voluntary redundancy as the BBC downsizes its national weather presenting team. None has taken up the offer yet.

The move has been prompted by sweeping changes to BBC Weather's output announced last week to reflect the growing use of digital platforms rather than traditional bulletins for forecasts.

The changes also form part of the broadcaster's two-year £500 million savings drive, which is expected to result in the loss of up to 2,000 roles.

Louise Lear, left, and below at a radio station launch in 1994, is a cornerstone of BBC Weather, while Tomasz Schafernaker, below right, also has more than 25 years' experience

Under the plans the number of national weather presenter roles is being reduced from 11 to 4.5. These will be split between London and Salford, with an additional four weather reporters based at a new BBC weather centre at the Met Office headquarters in Exeter to deliver articles, video, and social media updates.

The national presenters will be replaced on the *News at One* by "much-loved" local presenters and will be retained on the 10pm bulletin only on a trial basis.

At the same time, the half-hourly updates on the news channel are being scrapped in favour of automated forecast graphics. Radio forecasts will be read by programme presenters and announcers.

One staff member with knowledge of the changes said that they reflected how audiences wanted weather updates. "The appetite for weather has massively grown but people standing in front of a map giving a national picture is less relevant," they said.

"We are going to be more digital focused because there's a really strong argument that what is now needed is more reporting than presenting."

During the heatwave in late June, a record-breaking 23 million people access BBC Weather's online coverage and forecasting over a seven-day period.

At the same time, four of the five top stories for UK audiences were weather-related and there were more than 60 million views of weather coverage on the BBC Weather and BBC News social media accounts.

One presenter described the changes as brutal. "It's the end of an era for our weather presenting," they said. "The audience wants a bit of digital and TV — including a good old fashioned forecast."

Another former BBC Weather presenter argued that the team should be protected from the wider cuts affecting the broadcaster. "The team is already very lean and punched above its weight for many years producing a huge amount of output across all platforms 24 hours a day. It isn't fair to compare it to the behemoth that is the rest of BBC News."

Insiders are uncertain how audiences will react to the prospective departures after the reaction to Carol Kirkwood's decision to quit the BBC in April, at the age of 63, after almost three decades.

Schafernaker, 47, shot to prominence after he jokingly flipped the middle finger at Simon McCoy, the news anchor, on live television in 2010. Lear, 58, is considered a cornerstone of BBC Weather having presented bulletins for *Breakfast*, *News at Six* and BBC Radio over the course of almost three decades.

Bett, also 58, was chosen as one of the original launching team members for BBC News 24 in 1997 having joined *Look North* three years prior.

Jonathan Munro, the interim chief executive of BBC News, said that audiences would be well served by the BBC's renewed partnership with the Met Office as he announced the changes last week.

"As this summer's heatwaves have proved, up-to-the minute and accurate weather information has never been more important," he added.

Jesus may love you but insurers don't

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A motorist has threatened legal action after being denied insurance until he removed handmade letters that spelt out "Jesus loves you" on his car.

Simeon Chandra has claimed that the insurance broker, Go Skippy — which markets itself with a cartoon kangaroo logo and promotes "stress-free" policies — had told him that its underwriting team would not accept his application because a "modification" had been made to his vehicle.

The 35-year-old from Birmingham said in emails in June, that the company insisted he send photographic proof the stickers had been removed before the application could be reconsidered.

A Go Skippy representative directed Chandra to the company's terms of business, which said that the "insurer has the right to decline your risk, increase the premium or restrict the policy if any errors or omissions are found in the statement of Information".

The official added that "feedback from the underwriting department declined the modification done on the vehicle as per stickers added on the vehicle". No reasons were given.

Chandra said that the correspondence had left him uncertain as to whether he was still insured. Therefore, he removed the lettering and was given insurance cover. However, his representatives are considering legal action over the company's insistence that he remove the lettering, arguing that if the words had not had a Christian message there would have been no objection.

Somerset Bridge Group, the parent company of Go Skippy, was approached for comment.

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News

JAMES LINSELL CLARK/SWNS; JASON BYE FOR THE TIMES

Mobs roam the streets of Thetford as fury boils over

Herbie Russell

Resident of a quiet Norfolk market town engulfed by violence and disorder have said they fear what the weekend might bring.

The usual tranquillity of Thetford has been punctured by two nights of explosive anger that saw homes rumoured to be housing asylum seekers attacked. The mob turned out again on Thursday to continue their marauding.

Those mobs, numbering up to 100 people, had targeted homes on a leaked list — repeatedly shared in local Facebook groups — detailing the locations of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs). These are where migrants have been moved to as the government ends the expensive and much-hated use of hotels.

Windows were smashed, projectiles thrown and police officers attacked.

Protesters claimed the suspected asylum seekers were from "uncivilised cultures". This, they said, was a "last stand". They have been galvanised by the Home Office's plans to move over 1,000 asylum seekers into a former RAF air base a mile outside the town.

But trial by viral Facebook list is haphazard. At least one HMO that had its windows and door smashed was empty, according to the next-door neighbour. Some families from ethnic minority backgrounds said they were scared to go outside.

Albert, 51, a resident of the Abbey estate who declined to give his surname, said: "They're going to HMOs at random. People don't even know if they're illegal migrants or whatever." He said that as far as the protesters were concerned, "you know you've got a hit" if police turn up.

The disturbances began on Tuesday night after word spread on social media that a crowd was gathering on St John's Way estate at 7pm. A group of up to 50 people attempted to force entry to a property, smashing a window, a fence panel and a letterbox, police said.

Shortly before 10pm footage shared online showed officers escorting five men out of the property amid boos and shouts of "get out".

Joyce Gallagher, 52, who lives opposite, said she did not mind asylum seekers living near by "if they don't cause me any trouble", although her son was vehemently against them.

Joanna Michno, a woman of Polish heritage who lives opposite with her two daughters, said she was "scared" by the disturbance but understood protesters' anger. She said it was "unfair" that asylum seekers were given free housing while she had to work night shifts at a factory to afford her rent.

People then attacked a property on Elm Road, about a mile away, where they forced a resident out and allegedly stole a mobile phone.

Half a mile down the road a home on Bracken Road was targeted and its windows and front door smashed in. Loraine Dean, 73, said no one had lived there for about two years, though it had been purchased recently and was being converted into an HMO.

She claimed it was probably going to house "illegal immigrants or a load of single blokes next door" and it would be good if the vandalism meant they would never move in. "Fine, put them somewhere like [RAF] Barnham," she said. "Fence them. They keep on about human rights. You weren't thinking about human rights when you came over on the boat, did you."

Further up the road, Kalpana Mahendrarajah, 40, a school worker of Sri Lankan heritage, said the violence had made her afraid to let her children out. "I am worried because maybe people, [with] my skin colour and everything, they won't like it. You never know," she said.

Karshan Thasan, her sixteen-year-old son, said: "I'm just trying to stay away from it because I know it can get really violent sometimes. I just tend to stay away wherever I think the protests are."

On Wednesday protesters gathered outside the local police station before heading to Clover Way. In the chaos a woman on a mobility scooter was pepper-sprayed, a male police officer was hit by a rock and a female officer was bitten so hard it broke the skin. A third officer was spat at.

Residents said the property was occupied by several young men, who were possibly asylum seekers. John Finch, 90, said they were "always quiet" and "never caused problems".

The former serviceman, pointing at the egg-splattered windows opposite his home, said: "The people who came here to demonstrate are a disgrace not only to the British people, but to the community. Nobody has been bothered about it till now and suddenly that place has had more attention than Buckingham Palace."

On Thursday 100 people were back outside a rumoured HMO on Chester Way. Police evacuated panicked residents, while other officers were called to another house that was pelted with rocks, smashing its windows. Riot police flanked the street, while some neighbours sat oblivious enjoying the warm August evening.

Children performed wheelies on mountain bikes around the terraced cul-de-sac, while their parents sipped cans of Stella Artois and drank wine from plastic cups. A police drone buzzed overhead.

The protests have often found a sympathetic ear. Several women told The Times they no longer "felt safe" walking home at night, while others bemoaned the "hypocrisy" of migrants being given free housing while they languished on council waiting lists.

Jackie Rumble, 76, a resident on the street, said that she had been homeless and "living on my daughter's settee" since her husband, Brian, died nine years ago.

Kelly Jones, 37, an estate resident, watched with her partner. She was angry asylum seekers were being housed by the council. "We were homeless for two years," she said. "Luckily we had a car and we stayed in [that]."

Police detain a demonstrator in Thetford. Protests against a plan to house asylum seekers at RAF Barnham, left, are continuing. Jackie Rumble, below, with her daughter, supports the protests

Machete-wielding teen admits trying to steal Rolex watches

Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

A teenager who once threatened to decapitate the TV presenter Aled Jones and left a *Bridgerton* star traumatised after trying to steal her phone is facing more time in prison after admitting arming himself with a machete to steal Rolex watches.

Zacariah Boulares was 16 when he ambushed the *Songs Of Praise* star Jones in Chiswick High Road, west London, in 2023, threatening to cut off his head after snatching his £17,000 Daytona Rolex.

He is serving a 22-month prison sentence for an incident in February last year when he tried to steal the actress Genevieve Chenneour's mobile phone at a branch of Joe & The Juice on Kensington High Street, west London.

Now Boulares has admitted arming himself with a machete for two robberies in August 2023, when he targeted victims for their Rolex watches.

He robbed Mark Turner in Kensington Square Gardens, on August 9 2023, and ten days later struck again in a failed attempt to steal a Rolex watch from Neil Tallantire outside Waitrose in Porchester Road, Bayswater. Six weeks later, Boulares went on to target Jones.

Yesterday at Southwark crown court, Judge Alexander Milne KC adjourned the cases for a psychological assessment of Boulares and a probation report on "dangerousness" to be finalised for the sentencing hearing.

Boulares, 19, appeared in the dock to plead guilty to the robbery of Turner, having admitted the attempted robbery against Tallantire at an earlier hearing. He has also pleaded guilty to possession of a machete during both incidents.

Zacariah Boulares was 16 when he targeted victims for their watches

In a separate case yesterday, a prolific thief who attempted to steal a watch worth a quarter of a million pounds in broad daylight before being immediately caught by a plain-clothes police officer was jailed.

Brahim Keddad, 29, tried to rob Sun Tao, a Chinese tourist, of a Richard Mille watch in Mayfair, in central London, on April 30.

Tao was pushed by Keddad and fell to the ground during the attempted robbery, suffering injuries to his knee and arm, Southwark crown court was told.

The defendant attempted to flee but was caught by a plain-clothes Metropolitan Police officer who had been tailing him before the attempted robbery.

Keddad, a French citizen who has more than 20 previous convictions for theft and robbery offences, was sentenced to two years and four months in prison.

Keddad was told he must serve half his sentence in prison and it is understood he is also facing deportation from the UK.

Boy buried in ash reveals secrets of Minoans' decline

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

Thousands of years ago, a teenage boy living on the Turkish coast looked out to sea one day to see a tsunami up to 85ft high thundering towards his home. His limp left him no chance to reach higher ground.

The discovery of the boy's body, more than 3,500 years after his violent death, may finally have solved a puzzle over a volcanic eruption that was one of the biggest natural disasters of ancient times. Tests on his remains could confirm the eruption's role in triggering the decline of the Minoan civilisation.

The story of the boy's death began 140 miles away from his hometown of Çesme (pronounced "Cheshme"), across the Aegean Sea on the island of Santorini and is told in a documentary called *Lost Treasures Of Ancient Greece: Pompeii's Lost Twin*, which will air on National Geographic on Sunday.

The Minoans, a major Bronze Age culture in the Mediterranean, were based on Crete. But they had a thriving outpost in the town of Akrotiri, a maritime trading hub on Santorini, also known as Thera, by the middle of the second millennium BC.

But Akrotiri's success would be brought to an abrupt end by a massive eruption one hundred times more powerful than the one that buried Pompeii. Santorini was devastated and left as an archipelago of islands around the rim of a flooded central crater. Akrotiri came to be known as the Pompeii of the Aegean after its ruins were discovered, preserved beneath volcanic ash, in the 19th century. But they contained no sign of human remains.

The Minoans declined from the middle of the 1400s BC and all but disappeared by the 1100s BC. They were largely lost to history until the Palace of Knossos on Crete was rediscovered in 1900. Their written language has never been fully deciphered, leaving a shroud of mystery around how they lived and why they vanished.

The eruption at Santorini is thought to have ejected 44 cubic kilometres of material and would have sent tsunamis racing out across the Mediterranean. Crete would have been hit, prompting the theory that the eruption sparked the decline of the Minoan civilisation.

But there has long been debate over the date, due to a disagreement between scientific analysis of organic remains and archaeological evidence from human-made artefacts.

The answer may finally have been found. Professor Vasıf Şahoğlu's team, from Ankara University, unearthed a skeleton of a boy aged 15 or 16, lying on its back at a time when deliberate burials were laid on their side. They noted it was "the first human victim discovered within tsunami deposits directly associated with the Thera eruption".

He was probably buried in rubble as the tsunami hit. Signs of a pre-existing injury to his knee "likely caused a limp", they added.

Crucially, radiocarbon dating of the bones puts his death at about 1500 BC, and certainly "no earlier than the closing decades" of the 16th-century BC.

This provided an "exceptional time of death marker that avoids many of the uncertainties associated with dating charcoal, seeds, or other organic materials", they said. The documentary concluded: "These new findings are almost 100 years later than the commonly accepted date of around 1600 BC ... crucially they fit with the decline of the Minoan civilisation that began over the next 50 years."

Scientists examine the remains of the boy who died 3,500 years ago

TMS

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BBC's notes on a scandal

The BBC's *News at Ten* seemed a bit bemused by the coverage of the Jason Arday scandal, referring to it as a "row" which "had been bubbling for weeks in the media". It is perhaps worth noting that for years before this scandal the section of the media most keen on Arday was the BBC. *News at Ten* neglected to mention Arday's role as a guest editor of Radio 4's *Today* programme, as well as his popping up on *Question Time* and elsewhere. In one appearance, he made the extraordinary claim that 70 per cent of Brits are "currently living below the breadline". He'd mildly overstated this ... by roughly 50 percentage points. Not only did everyone nod along, but the BBC took this comment in isolation and tweeted it out.

Birmingham Yardley MP Jess Phillips has not returned to government after resigning under Keir Starmer and she's delighted. "I hated being a government minister," she told Electoral Dysfunction. *"I'm not suited to it." There were early signs that she wasn't a natural fit in Whitehall. Within hours of joining the Home Office, civil servants asked her if the government should appeal a case the department had lost. Phillips had to explain that she had supported the case while in opposition. In fact, her constituency office referred to the department by its initials but with an F in front. Government may have been a pain in her neck, but Phillips is set to once again be a thorn in its side.*

ONE-UPMANSHIP

MPs and politicians have been descending on the Isle of Wight for the 200th year of Cowes Week. The Spectator reports that Joe Robertson, Tory MP for the other side of the island, was a helmsman in the sailing regatta and earned a flag by coming third in his race. Readers in Scotland will not be surprised to hear that Malcolm Offord, Reform's leader in Holyrood, was also there as he actually raced in the Channel during the Scottish elections. Celebrations for the bicentenary were launched by the Princess Royal, whose father used to race there. On one occasion, a competitor told Prince Philip to "F*** off!" after a perceived infraction. The prince replied, "My wife owns the water!"

The Men Behaving Badly *actor Martin Clunes was perhaps playing against his natural type in that show. The world of sex was not something he had a natural affinity for as a young man. Asked on the podcast* Rosebud *whether he was taught about the facts of life, Clunes said "No — I tried to teach myself". By the sounds of things, the teenage Clunes, below, had a good understanding of the theory but didn't master the practical.*

ACID REFLUX

This weekend marks one of the most curious anniversaries in the history of cinema. On August 9, 1996, filming on the set of *Titanic* was postponed after 80 members of the cast and crew were rushed to hospital because someone had laced their lunch with hallucinogens. The director James Cameron rushed to the loo in a panic, while the actor Bill Paxton "enjoyed the buzz" and the cameraman Caleb Deschanel "led a number of crew down the hall in a highly vocal conga line". The culprit was never found, but Cameron's theory was that it was something to do with a vendetta between caterers. Then again, as any good chef will tell you, a well balanced recipe needs a hint of acid.

JACK BLACKBURN

TIMES Events

Caitlin Moran on How to be Hopeful

Join us for a brilliantly funny and uplifting evening as Times columnist **Caitlin Moran** hits the stage for the London instalment of her nationwide tour. In conversation with her friend and colleague – Times Radio presenter **Hugo Rifkind** – Caitlin will unravel the themes of her essential new book, *How to be Hopeful: A Year of Attempting to Feel Less Awful About the World.*

Thursday, September 17 | 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Bryanston Square, London, W1H 1PQ

Book your tickets at **thetimes.com/events**

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

Feathered friends Tricia Phillips, of Morndyke Parrot Sanctuary near Thirsk, is campaigning to free the UK's estimated 1.5 million pet parrots from cages

Seasonal pests become year-round menaces

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

As you sit in your garden or a park this summer, you may notice an unusual lack of wasps hovering around your lunch. Instead there may be a desperate rat, a thirsty colony of ants, cockroaches or mice out in search of water or food.

The soaring temperatures can cause cracks around windows, doors and brickwork to expand, giving these pests a way into our homes to look for a drink. "Dripping taps, pet bowls, air conditioning run-off and drains" are the key targets, pest control firms have warned.

Milder, wetter winters, warm springs and sweltering summers triggered by climate change are altering our relationship with common home and garden pests, not necessarily by boosting their numbers, but by changing their breeding patterns and behaviours, affecting the places and seasons in which we encounter them, experts have said.

This has turned some pests that used to be seasonal problems into year-round menaces, spreading their numbers out across a fuller year. "When outdoor puddles, morning dew and natural ditches dry up, pests such as rats, mice, ants and cockroaches are forced to look for alternative water sources," driving them into greater contact with humans, said a warning this week by the Protex pest control firm.

Bedbugs are also on the rise, driven by factors including the return of international travel after the pandemic as people bring the creatures home, as well as a growing resistance to cheap pesticides. The London neighbourhoods of Islington, Whitechapel and Croydon have been dubbed the bedbug hotspots of the UK by JG Pest Control.

The company said rats had overtaken wasps in its call-outs for the first time, jumping by 38 per cent compared with last year, accounting for 7,271 jobs in the past 12 months. Meanwhile, mice callouts had risen by 48 per cent.

The mild, wet winter helped "more young survive" the season, so rodents did "not get the hard winter knock-back they once did", the firm said. It added: "Rodent pressure is no longer a purely autumn-and-winter concern; it now runs closer to year-round."

Sally Cutler, a professor in microbiology at the University of East London, said that there was an "abundant crop of nuts and tree seeds" last autumn that boosted rodent numbers. However, Steven Belmain, an ecology professor at the University of Greenwich, said that "hot and dry together is not good for rats" and would not boost their populations, but might make them more likely to cross paths with humans.

Comparing July 2025 and 2026, Rentokil said it had seen a 30 per cent increase in ant call-outs, a 23 per cent rise for bedbugs and a 22 per cent increase for spiders — but a 38 per cent decrease for wasps.

Oliver Gregory, from Protex, said that climate change had "diluted everything ... over the course of the year". He explained: "We'd have really bad rat problems in the winter and really bad insect problems in the summer. There's not really that switch now."

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Kids' faith camp with cleric cancelled

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

A cleric who has said a wife "cannot" say she will not have sex with her husband was booked as a speaker at a British children's summer camp.

Sayed Moustafa al-Qazwini made the remarks in a podcast in February in which he described "companionship" as a husband's right. He said that if a woman was not ill, menstruating or suffering physically or psychologically, "she cannot say to her husband, 'No, I don't sleep with you'."

Qazwini, an Iraqi-American, is based in Orange County, California. He had star billing at CampUK, a six-day residential event for children and families that was due to be held this month at Condover Halle in Shropshire.

The event was cancelled after JCA, which runs the hall, was approached by The Times. JCA said the event had already been under review "in accordance with JCA's safeguarding responsibilities and procedures". It added: "Following that review, the camp is no longer taking place in August 2026."

Sayed Moustafa al-Qazwini has said that wives cannot refuse to have sex

The event had advertised strict rules on women and girls. There was to be "strict gender segregation", and the hijab was to be compulsory in public and mixed areas

In the podcast, Qazwini said women were "susceptible to anxiety [and] depression" and that a husband must take that "into consideration". He added: "But if she is OK physically, mentally, she's not on her period, she cannot say no to him. She cannot. This is his right, natural right."

Qazwini has also made inflammatory statements about Jews, Israel and Hamas. In a lecture in March, he discussed an Arabic phrase meaning "the hand of a Jew", saying it signified "a hand of treachery and dishonesty". He has also likened Hamas to the leaders of American independence.

Qazwini appeared at CampUK in 2022 and 2024 and at its spring retreat last year.

JCA said it welcomed thousands of young people every year from schools, charities, sports clubs and faith groups, adding: "Our role is to provide safe, high-quality residential experiences. We remain committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment." CampUK and Qazwini were asked for comment.

Charity investigated after arrest for 'helping Hamas'

David Brown

An Islamic aid foundation is being investigated by the Charity Commission after a humanitarian worker was accused by the US of providing support to a terrorist organisation.

Mohammad Yousef Hasna, 45, from Istanbul in Turkey, allegedly used his role linked to the Al-Khair Foundation to "co-ordinate directly with Hamas's senior leadership regarding the delivery of funds and supplies to Gaza".

He was arrested in London last week, at the request of the US, and remanded in custody until August 28.

Hasna describes himself on his LinkedIn profile as "global director at Al-Khair Foundation". The foundation said in a statement that Hasna was "an employee of one of our implementing partner organisations overseas" and not an employee of the charity. The foundation, which received £74 million in donations last year, said: "We take our responsibility to safeguard the funds entrusted to us by our generous donors with the utmost seriousness and are committed to ensuring they are used for their intended humanitarian purposes.

"Before entering into any partnership, we undertake due diligence and compliance checks to help ensure that partner organisations and relevant individuals are not subject to applicable sanctions or included on relevant lists of designated or proscribed persons or organisations maintained by the competent authorities."

The foundation said it had submitted a serious incident report to the commission, adding: "We are co-operating with the commission's inquiry."

Tradwives go wild in Copenhagen

This week Copenhagen, the capital of cardamon buns and liberated women, held its biannual fashion week (Susie Lethbridge writes). But the city that gave us cool leopard print jeans and flip-flops on the front row has now opted for something far more conservative: tradwife dressing. Think floor-sweeping prairie dresses, vintage headscarves and frilly aprons.

The rise of the tradwife aesthetic has been hard to ignore online. The influencers Hannah Neeleman and Nara Smith boast a combined TikTok following of more than 23 million and are largely responsible for the surge in interest in the term over the past three years.

The community even has a magazine, Evie, which has been dubbed the "conservative Cosmo" and covers topics such as natural contraception and trophy wife tutorials for modest women. A quick tradwife search online generates more than 120,000 Instagram posts, 4.5 million Google hits and even led to an entry in the Cambridge English Dictionary last year.

Luxury brands are embracing the aesthetic too. At Miu Miu's spring/summer show, the Italian house featured crystal-embellished aprons on the catwalk, which have been worn by the actresses Emma Corrin and Chloe Sevigny on the red carpet.

Its sister label, Prada, debuted elbow-length washing-up gloves in Fairy Liquid greens and mustard yellows.

The Danish brands Ganni and Baum Und Pferdgarten have built a cult following around their use of similarly traditional clothing traits: long ruffled dresses, puff-sleeved blouses and dainty floral prints. Ganni sells a variety of apron-esque dresses and prices start from £220.

Natalie Hammond, a freelance fashion editor, said: "Maybe it's because of the success of the book *Yesteryear*, but the trad-wife archetype is still part of the cultural discourse, and that includes street style.

"But take these outfits with a pinch of salt — fashionistas attend fashion week to be photographed but also to have fun, particularly in Copenhagen. There's no denying the shift towards a more demure way of dressing, but it's a fashion trend rather than a tradwife lifestyle."

So no need to pull on your frilly apron and headscarf.

The tradwife Hannah Neeleman, far left, has a huge following on social media. Aprons, vintage headscarves and prairie dresses were popular in Copenhagen

Path that led to volunteer's death

Christian aid worker met an asylum seeker through her work, **Lara Wildenberg** and **George Odling** write

Three weeks ago a derelict, graffiti-sprayed Athens car park became the scene of a gruesome crime when a homeless man made the horrific discovery of a woman's body in a suitcase.

The savage end met by the victim has caused outrage, which only grew when, 12 days later, she was named as Elisabeth-Jane Ross, a devout Christian from Edinburgh.

She regularly visited the city to volunteer with groups assisting refugees with medical care and integration into Greek society.

The Afghan who appeared in court on Wednesday charged with her murder, Sharif Ahmadzai, 26, was exactly the sort of person that Ross, 38, known to friends and family as Lisa, had devoted her life to helping.

He had arrived in Greece from Kabul a decade earlier, won asylum and successfully integrated into Greek society. He had married an American, built a family and even became a national boxing champion.

Both the alleged attacker and the victim had crossed countries to be in Greece — but their starts in life were a world apart.

Ross grew up in a Victorian cottage in Currie, a cosy village west of Edinburgh, close to the sprawling campus of Heriot-Watt University.

Her twin sister, Joanne, went to Currie high school, then the University of Glasgow, and is now a mother of two, working as a Glasgow university nurse and living in a prosperous suburb.

Their parents, Julie and Kenneth, a partner at Scotland's largest law firm, issued a tribute to their late daughter on Thursday, describing Lisa as "kind, principled and selfless".

"Her integrity was absolute, and she dedicated her life to helping others in need," the Ross family said. "We are in deep pain."

Her life was itinerant and she eschewed social media, rarely posting pictures or updates of her life. She worked stints in her home city of Edinburgh, before travelling to far flung corners of the world on a "mission". She was single and, friends say, devoted to her Christian faith.

She was a member of Destiny Church in Edinburgh and its offshoot, City on a Hill church, both of which paid tribute after her death.

Peter Anderson, City on a Hill's pastor, said Ross's life was "all about mission", and Destiny Church said in a statement that she "will always be remembered for her unstoppable passion to help those who were less fortunate than herself".

Destiny Church is one of the UK's most powerful and controversial evangelical organisations. It was investigated by Scotland's charity watchdog and offered advice as a result. An investigation by The Times revealed allegations of grooming and financial coercion, which were denied. Anderson and Ross were some of the worshippers who left to join the breakaway City on a Hill church. Many of her friends were also worshippers.

Sharif Ahmadzai, who portrayed himself as a devout Christian, at a migrant camp about ten years ago

After her death, Anderson told worshippers in an online message: "We have lost a precious church member, Lisa. She was a member of our church for 20 years, and a very precious girl, and it was a really tragic loss."

Highlighting a biblical psalm that he said was about "our heart for mission", he said: "I cannot think of a psalm that links more to Lisa's life, because Lisa's life was actually all about mission. She had a big passion for missions. She had been to many places on mission, she served people, she cared for people all over the world."

Ross's Christian beliefs drove her travel around the world, taking on humanitarian roles for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charities.

In 2013, she visited Switzerland to work with Youth With A Mission (YWAM). Magali Tassone, a fellow volunteer, who shared a room with Ross at the time, said she had a "deep compassion" for refugees and women who had been abused.

Tassone said Ross had visited friends in Norway and Denmark and supported missionaries financially. "She would always give to other people, and be there for people," Tassone said. "Even to the point that she could sometimes forget about herself because she would spend so much time giving to people, visiting people and supporting people."

In 2015, she worked in South Africa on a biblical counselling course offered by YWAM, which focused on "inner healing, and personal transformation".

Ross frequently travelled to Greece to work with NGOs. In 2019 she volunteered with One Heart, an Athens-based group that provides medical support to refugees, working with children and abused women.

The group's president, Sahar Kamrani Lankhaar, described Ross as "a lovely and very kind volunteer".

It was through this work that Ross's life intersected with Ahmadzai's in February this year.

The Afghan ran a ministry working with refugees named Love Every Nation (LEN) alongside his wife, Alaina Hall, a devout Christian from Georgia in the United States.

Ross became friendly with Hall through their volunteer work and stayed at a flat near Kypseli owned by LEN, a property to which the couple had access.

On the surface, Ahmadzai appeared to have dedicated himself to Christianity and helping others less fortunate — though his start in life was a world away from the comfortable Scottish village where his alleged victim grew up.

Ahmadzai's family was wiped out by the Taliban by the time he was 15 and photos online show his relatives grieving at the funeral.

In 2016 he hired a people smuggler to try to reach Britain, where his aunt lives. He travelled through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, before arriving on the island of Lesbos on a small boat on his third attempt.

It was at the island's Moria migrant camp, a decade ago, where he would meet his future wife who was volunteering with her family.

A year later, Ahmadzai converted to Christianity and by 2021, he had persuaded Hall that he could join her in her mission.

The American wrote on the LEN website: "Suddenly I realized how much I did like Sharif. I had seen his growth and his heart for the Lord, and it was so attractive to me. We prayed and prayed about pursuing each other, seeking God's approval first. He seemed to swing open the doors for us."

The couple married in April 2023 and their son was born in April.

The boxer, who won a Greek national super-lightweight title in March, helped raise money for LEN by running fitness classes in Kypseli, directly across the road from where Ross's body was discovered.

Ahmadzai sought to convey himself as a devout Christian as dedicated to helping others as Ross and his wife.

Though he denies murdering Ross, Ahmadzai is said to have already admitted to stealing her bank cards and dumping her body.

He is yet to enter a plea, but claims he found the Scot already dead inside the flat and was persuaded by an elderly Greek homeless man named Nikos to dump the body.

Ahmadzai now sits in a squalid prison cell awaiting trial for her murder.

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FINNBARR WEBSTER/GETY IMAGES

Taking flight More than 100 hot air balloons took to the skies in Europe's largest three-day annual International Balloon Fiesta at Ashton Court Estate in Bristol

Steer clear of deer, warn Royal Parks

Another warning has been issued against approaching wild deer and risking injury as video showed children and adults feeding them in a London park.

Royal Parks said it was "shocked" by the "highly dangerous behaviour" after online clips showed a group of people standing in the middle of a herd of deer and feeding them. People should not approach the deer in London's Richmond Park and Bushy Park, it said. Keep at least 50 metres away,

A spokesman added: "The deer are wild animals, not pets. They are powerful and unpredictable. A red stag can weigh up to 200kg. Getting this close and offering food, puts people at real risk of serious injury."

Feeding the deer is "harmful to both people and animals", and the powerful creatures will "approach and pester" visitors if they associate them with food, the spokesman said.

Royal Parks issued a similar warning last month when video shared on social media showed adults and children crowding around and stroking deer in Richmond Park, southwest London.

At the time Paul Richards, manager of Richmond Park, said the deer were "wild, powerful animals" and urged people to keep their distance.

Members of the public should put all food out of sight and move away slowly if a deer comes towards them.

How 20mph is taking over towns

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent
Yennah Smart Data Journalist

When the bestselling novelist Lynda La Plante tearfully told a court that any driving ban would end her writing career many felt a pang of sympathy.

Especially after it was revealed the speeding offences she admitted did not involve travelling at breakneck speed but small breaches of the 20mph speed limit near her home in Kingston upon Thames in southwest London.

The crime author was the latest driver to be stung by the increasing number of 20mph roads in Britain.

Analysis from The Times shows that in the past six months more than 1,000 miles of road have new 20mph limits, the most interventionist councils being Enfield, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Cornwall and Solihull.

It means almost a third of the roads in the country now have a 20mph limit — about 40,000 miles of the total road network.

Nearly 30 million people now live in places where local authorities have made a commitment to introduce 20mph in urban areas, and it is the default limit in Wales.

The rise in 20mph roads has unsurprisingly led to an increase in speeding offences. In the first three months of this year 21,858 were recorded that specifically related to 20mph limits.

If this carries on at the current rate, 2026 could have the second highest number of offences in a single year, behind 2025, when more than 125,000 were recorded.

Data analysis from The Times found that last year in England and Wales 2.23 million drivers attended and completed speed awareness courses, but this is not broken down by the speed at which the driver was clocked. This figure represents an increase of almost a million in a decade and is a 12 per cent increase on the figure from 2024.

Outside inner London, where 20mph is common, the city of Bristol has the highest proportion of 20mph roads, at almost 85 per cent, followed by Sefton at 80 per cent and Portsmouth at 78 per cent.

Nick Freeman, the solicitor known as Mr Loophole, who represented La Plante and numerous other celebrities including Sir David Beckham, told The Times that the country was "prioritising speed observance instead of road safety" when the reality of driving safely was "nuanced".

He said it was safer for drivers to focus on the road in the busy part of Kingston upon Thames where La Plante was flashed by the speed camera. "In that area, there are eight schools, one university, nine pedestrian crossings, many bus stops, cycling lanes either side. I would say it's better to focus on what's going on out of the car, which runs counter to a 20mph limit. If you're obsessed with speed you're not looking outside of the car.

"I'm not saying 20mph is wrong, and complying and being observant is paramount, but there are occasions when your speed is going to go above that, and perhaps someone steps out into the road, and your focus comes off the dashboard, or you're going downhill, we all do it."

Andy Wilman, the former *Top Gear* producer was banned from driving for travelling at 24mph in a 20mph zone. Eddie Redmayne, the actor, received a fine after his car was clocked at 28mph in a 20mph zone.

Phil Jones, a transport specialist and the architect of the 20mph default limit in Wales, said it was "undesirable" when drivers are fined, but that 20mph limits worked — even if drivers were more likely to speed.

"Would you rather be hit by a car that is legally doing 29mph in a 30 or a car where the driver is breaking the law by doing 25mph in a 20?" Jones said.

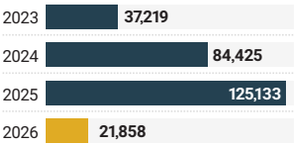
"The evidence shows there is a 6 to 8 per cent reduction in casualties for every 1mph reduction in speed. Anything that brings down speed is a positive."

How to keep to 20mph

Change to second for corners: manual drivers may feel that 20mph sits awkwardly between gears, while changing down around bends will help you control speed.
Use cruise control or a speed limiter: they can stop speeds from creeping up and limit dashboard-staring.
Keep your distance from the car in front: tailgating can lead drivers matching the speed of cars ahead.
Be patient with cyclists: speeding up to overtake may be caught on residential road cameras.
Double-check new limits at junctions: many 20mph zones begin when turning off main roads.
Roll down windows on sunny days: soundproofing in modern cars can make it hard to gauge speed.
Don't rely on the 10 per cent rule: It's only guidance for police.

Caught out

20mph speeding offences in Great Britain



*2026 figure is for January to March
Source: Marshall Motor Group

Cost of EU ban on Brazilian beef could be paid by British farmers

Hamish McCorriston

Restaurant-goers face being served poorly regulated beef as a new EU ruling threatens to flood British markets with thousands of tonnes of Brazilian meat, suppliers have warned.

The decision from Brussels, set to begin on September 3, will stop imports of red meat and poultry from Brazil over concerns around antimicrobial medicines used to treat livestock.

Overuse of the medicines risks causing antibiotic resistance to drugs critical for human health and has been linked to growth promotion in animals — a practice banned in the UK. Suppliers have also criticised the environmental costs of South American cattle ranching, responsible for huge swathes of Amazonian deforestation.

Farmers' unions in all four UK nations have urged the government to replicate the EU's ban, warning that the diverted produce will undercut their prices and shake confidence in British food standards.

The chef Oliver Gladwin, 39, who has set up seven restaurants using traceable local produce, said: "If you get [beef] for a better price, a lot of establishments won't say anything. They'll just live off the fact that we're in Britain producing some of the best beef in the world, but selling a different product because this stuff has leaked into the food chain."

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board UK imports of Brazilian beef rose from 5,000 tonnes to nearly 12,000 between 2024 and 2025. It said it was unlikely all the 83,000 tonnes imported by the EU last year would be diverted to the UK.

While Defra is reviewing whether to introduce a ban, The Times understands this assessment will not be completed until 2027. John Powell, CEO of the British Meat Processors Association, said such a delay could have a "very severe impact" on the domestic market. NFU president Tom Bradshaw said: "Public confidence could be undermined if consumers believe the UK is importing beef or poultry meat that the EU has deemed unsafe."

A spokesperson for Defra said: "We are actively working with industry and Brazilian authorities to assess any risks posed by Brazilian beef imports and will always act to protect our farmers."

UK found a gift the president would love ... then didn't give it

Olivia Empson New York

When President Trump came to Britain for a state visit in September, diplomats were supposed to present him with a personalised, gold-crested red dispatch box inscribed with "President of the United States".

Sir Olly Robbins, the top civil servant at the Foreign Office at the time, told diplomats it would be "one of the gifts that would mean the most" to Trump. When it had not materialised in the weeks before Trump's arrival, Lord Mandelson, then ambassador to the US, went "tonto".

The question of what happened to that red dispatch box, designed to mimic the briefcases used by British government ministers and the monarch to transport official papers, remained a mystery. Now The Times can disclose that the government never presented Trump with the gift, despite it having been commissioned months earlier by an unidentified ally of the president.

Mohammed Suleman, who owns Barrow, Hepburn & Gale, the company that makes the leather boxes, had told the government in the months leading up to Trump's visit that failure to present him with the box would risk hurting transatlantic relations.

In a letter to No 10 in July last year he expressed concerns that "a presentation in the fringes by anyone other than the prime minister or the monarch during a state visit would be potentially embarrassing both to the country and the office of the prime minister".

Suleman said the Trump ally who commissioned a custom design in February was happy for the prime minister to present it during the state visit. The company held off making the box until it had a "sensible discussion" with the government to confirm the plans, which it said "never happened".

Suleman said: "The original commission ... was a private individual who wanted to create something unique for the president. This is an individual who doesn't need any favours from the president. Who knows what it would have done in terms of the relationship that the then prime minister was trying to build with the president."

The red box had been specially made

According to an email on August 26 from David Tinline, a senior civil servant in No 10, to James Roscoe, then deputy ambassador to the US, the box had been "put into production".

Suleman said "we received a frantic email from No 10". He said a call was agreed with a member of the civil service, and they agreed they should meet. But Suleman said: "We heard nothing back, absolutely nothing."

The Foreign Office was contacted for comment. In the end Trump received a wartime submarine bell. The box will be given to Trump in a separate presentation. It is unclear if the British government will be involved.

The truth is out there — again? Trump releases more UFO files

Records detail strange sightings from a fake alien crash to objects tracked by US aircraft, writes **George Grylls**

US DEPARTMENT OF WAR

The reports were alarming. In a remote location on the Atlantic coast of Brazil, a large metal balloon had crashed to earth. It had made a significant crater upon impact and the pilot of the mysterious dirigible was dead. Even more concerningly, the crewman appeared to be wearing a spacesuit.

The date was November 20, 1963, and with the US seized by Cold War anxieties, André C Simonpietri, the scientific attaché at the American consulate in Rio de Janeiro, wrote to his concerned bosses at the State Department in Washington with some reassuring news. A telegram had been received from Harold Midkiff, the US consul in Salvador. Midkiff had confirmed the alien invasion of Brazil was a hoax.

The 63-year-old diplomatic cable was included in the latest batch of documents released by the Trump administration as part of its declassification of US government archives about sightings of unidentified anomalous phenomena, the official term for UFOs.

President Trump came under pressure from his supporters to release the files after Barack Obama appeared to confirm in a podcast interview earlier this year that aliens do exist. "They're real but I haven't seen them," Obama said.

In a post on Truth Social in February, Trump agreed to the mass release of confidential FBI reports and Pentagon files about these "highly complex, but extremely interesting and important, matters".

The Pentagon built a website called war.gov/UFO for Americans to peruse, where the fifth batch of documents was uploaded on Friday.

Many incidents date from the Cold War — such as a 1964 sighting of an "ultra-high-speed UFO north of Puerto Rico" that was deemed erroneous. But the release also included far more recent sightings.

A pilot who served in the Afghanistan war told the FBI in 2024 that he was flying from Boston to Dublin when he saw "lights in the sky". "The lights were white in colour, would start out as dim and get brighter before they eventually faded out," he said.

The pilot was able to "capture video on his Samsung Galaxy S22 phone". The FBI created a rendering of large black triangle, depicting what he supposedly saw.

In a 2023 incident in Colorado Springs, an FBI informant, who frequently watched aircraft fly near the military bases in the area, went out to admire the stars when he saw an "equilateral triangular object with a red light in each of the three corners".

He said the object moved at a speed "comparable to a helicopter" before it "almost instantaneously accelerated to possibly Mach 1 or 2" and disappeared.

"He called his wife about 60 seconds later to tell her about the event, and she said that his voice sounded robotic, as if there was electronic interference occurring with the call," the report said.

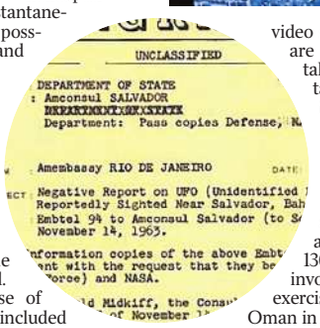
The latest release of UFO files also included video several clips. Most are grainy footage taken from US military aircraft showing black dots, grey dots and, occasionally, white dots. One showed the infrared sensor display aboard a US Special Operations Forces AC-130J gunship that was involved in a live fire exercise over the Gulf of Oman in 2021. The crew described the dots as "cold orbs" approximately four feet in diameter.

"UAPs also appeared to react to the aircraft firing its main cannon."

In total, 56 per cent of Americans believe that aliens exist, 30 per cent think that UFOs are alien ships or life forms and 47 per cent think extraterrestrials have visited Earth, according to a YouGov poll.

Several prominent figures on the American right, including the broadcaster Tucker Carlson, have promoted the theory that UFOs are "spiritual entities". JD Vance, the vice-president, believes the objects are in fact "demons".

An artist's impression made by the FBI of a reported incident at Colorado Springs; a screengrab of a video taken by a US aircraft, left; and the message debunking the Brazil hoax, below



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Meta must pay $1bn over harm to children

Keiran Southern West Coast Editor

Meta has been ordered to pay almost $1 billion to address harm done to children by social media after a judge in New Mexico significantly increased the cost of a landmark verdict.

The Silicon Valley company, which owns Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, lost a civil trial in March in which it was accused of failing to protect young people on its platforms.

New Mexico's Democratic district attorney accused Meta of enabling child sexual exploitation and of knowing its products harmed users. After the verdict jurors imposed $375 million in civil penalties against Meta. In the second phase prosecutors asked Judge Bryan Biedscheid, sitting in Santa Fe, to impose further fines and enforce significant changes to the platforms.

In an order published on Thursday, Biedscheid said Meta must pay an additional $567 million, leaving the total fine at $942 million and making it the largest ruling against the company over child safety.

Biedscheid said $420 million will be used for treatment services for young people. The rest will go towards causes including "awareness and prevention" of issues related to social media harms. The judge called "the psychological harm and sexual exploitation of children the pollution that must be abated".

A Meta spokesperson said: "We disagree with the ruling and will appeal. We work hard to keep people safe on our platforms and have been transparent about the challenges of identifying and removing bad actors and harmful content.

"We remain confident in our record of protecting teens online and will continue to defend ourselves against claims that misrepresent the facts."

The first phase of the trial found that Meta had repeatedly violated New Mexico's Unfair Practices Act, and "steered" young users toward harmful content. In the second, Meta was deemed to be a "public nuisance".

The company's platforms could now look very different.

Biedscheid ordered Facebook and Instagram to impose a range of child-safety measures. They include monthly limits on teenagers' use of Facebook and Instagram, restrictions on notifications and the prevention of adults contacting users aged under 18 whom they do not know. The court ordered Meta to report twice a year on its progress in complying with the measures.

The New Mexico trial was seen as a bellwether in efforts to rein in Big Tech.

AARON CHOWN/PA

A 17-metre galleon with crow's nest and slide is the showpiece of the revamped Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Playground in Hyde Park

Diana's playground gets a £3m glow-up

Playgrounds are a big deal in my household. If it were up to my children, aged four and two, we'd go all day, every day. So, naturally, I was keen to experience the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Playground in the northwest corner of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, on the first day of its reopening this week (Jenny Coad writes).

The Royal Parks has spent £3 million giving it a big zhuzh and the queue to get in snaked around the corner.

But after 30 minutes and lots of snacks, we were in and I was immediately struck by the sand. So white! You could be in the Greek islands, only with the addition of lots of crispy leaves and lots of sticky children. Which is a good thing, because you will take it home with you by the shoe-load. I left with a thin coating of it on my face.

The showpiece is the 17-metre galleon, a beached beauty of a ship, which children can crawl under, slide off and climb all the way up to the crow's nest. My son, Jasper, being two, was thrilled to go into the "big hole" in its side and linger in the dark underneath, out of reach.

There's a new area, designed more for his age group, with ship wheels that spin pleasingly, more of that sand as well as dinky slides and walkways. Thanks to the hosepipe ban, the water is off in the waterplay park, for which I was grateful as that is a whole other clothing undertaking.

Instead we went down a double slide in the new treehouse area. Parents will be pleased to hear that the loos are clean and unsurprised to learn that the snacks are expensive — £4.40 for ice cream, though it is Hackney Gelato and we are in Kensington. Then again, it's a small price to pay if you are negotiating an exit.

Leaving any playground is like trying to depart a party when it's a bit late and you've had too much to drink. Everyone's tired and in need of a bath. Ice cream helps.

Great swings, but they could go higher

You have to get your priorities straight with playgrounds (writes Jasper, aged 2). Mine are swings. How high do they go? Pretty high — but you can always go higher, in my opinion. The floor beneath them was bark, which has such an lovely texture, earthy notes. I couldn't decide which swing was best, so I tried them all.

I wanted to go down the big silver slide but Mummy said no. I wanted an ice cream. Mummy tried to fob me off with a cup but I was absolutely adamant about having a cone.

The playground was good, especially the swings, but the things that really made an impression were the tractors — two big green ones — that we saw in the park on the way home, plus the train (so many tunnels).

IRA bomb attack inspires novel on Princess Margaret

Kate Mansey Assistant Editor

When Princess Margaret visited Ireland in 1965, what was to be a relaxing break led to a 48-hour lockdown when an IRA bomb exploded near her holiday home.

The powerful blast shook houses a quarter of a mile away and cut the power supply to the estate where Margaret was staying with her husband Lord Snowdon — his sister's home of Abbeyleix House.

Queen Elizabeth's sister was ordered to stay inside while the police went on a 50-mile chase to catch the culprits.

While the events might otherwise have been a forgotten footnote in history, the royal drama has now inspired a new novel.

As well as the drama of the blast, *A House in Winter* also imagines the internal conflict within the marriage of Margaret and Lord Snowdon, who divorced after 18 years of marriage in 1978.

The novel's author, Emily Hourican, said that she was fascinated to discover the little-known story.

"I just found it, digging around in newspaper archives, kind of on the trail of something else," Hourican said. "And I started reading about it. And then I asked lots of people who I know who are historians and nobody knew about it. So then I was really intrigued.

"What I loved about it was the contained nature of it and also the fact that nobody knew what I thought was kind of a big deal.

"If the IRA throw bombs in the vicinity of a member of the royal family, that seems to me a huge deal and then I loved the idea that they were locked in this house. It's a huge house, it's not like being locked in a two-up, two-down but all the same it really intrigued me."

Around 11pm one January night toward the end of Margaret and Snowdon's stay, a gang of men entered the estate and blew up a transformer that cut off the electricity supply.

The couple were uninjured but went into lockdown on the estate owned by Lady de Vesci, in County Laois, 60 miles southwest of Dublin.

Reports at the time said that a gang of men tried to make their escape. The police gave chase for 50 miles, during which a petrol bomb was thrown at a police car.

Ten men were eventually arrested and questioned by the Civic Guard, appearing in court accused of illegal obstruction and felling trees to block the road.

Princess Margaret and her husband Lord Snowdon were on holiday

The blast was attributed to the IRA and thought to be a protest at the visit by British royalty.

The new book is described as a cross between *The Crown*, the Netflix drama, and works by Maeve Binchy, the best-selling author who amassed a loyal following.

It follows a trend for books and films which have dramatised the life of the royal family.

The Crown on the streaming service Netflix is the most notable example, charting the history of the Windsors.

It received mixed reviews with some critics noting that living members of the royal family were badly served by their depiction on screen.

Being faithful to the real characters was something Hourican said she was mindful about when writing about Margaret.

The author said: "I think she had a great personality. I think that it is the funny mix that she seems to have been of being on the one hand this hilariously rude person and some of the ways that she deployed her privilege and her position are really well known.

"But then on the other hand, there is this kind of side to her that seems very vulnerable."

A House in Winter by Emily Hourican is published by Eriu on September 3

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Comment

Shapps ban bodes ill for Badenoch's Tories

Every leader wants to put their mark on a party but spurning experience and service in candidate selection is perilous

Paul Goodman

@PAULGOODMANCH

Grant Shapps has co-chaired the Conservative Party and served in government as home secretary, defence secretary, energy secretary, business secretary and transport secretary during the course of almost 20 years in parliament. At a sprightly 57, Shapps is evidently qualified to be a Tory candidate at the next general election — if he wants to be one. Which he clearly does, since he applied to be on the party's list of approved candidates. And was refused.

The Conservatives' opponents have been out and about this week asking how it can be that Shapps, who is Jewish, can be denied the chance to be a parliamentary candidate, while Joshua Bonehill-Paine, a former neo-Nazi convicted of inciting racial hatred and racially aggravated harassment, could be given the opportunity to stand as a council candidate — his main target in his Hitlerish days being Luciana Berger, then a Labour MP and now a Labour peer, who was targeted in unspeakably vile terms.

Unease about the juxtaposition has echoed within the party as well as outside it. All concerned would gain from reading Bonehill-Paine's blog in which he describes how he became an antisemite and how he renounced the hatred of Jews. It is hard to read it without believing that the repentant Bonehill-Paine, now a producer of AI videos supporting Kemi Badenoch, deserves a chance to wipe the slate clean and make his way in mainstream politics.

Nonetheless, timing matters, as does diplomacy. It was unwise of Bonehill-Paine to seek a candidacy before looking to make amends with those he directly victimised — a fact he seems to have recognised by eventually withdrawing. His supporters will claim that Berger, as a Labour member, was unlikely to cut a Conservative much slack — and point out that Gideon Falter, of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, said it is "keeping an open mind".

All the same, the Tories will not have wanted to get on the wrong side of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which declined the party's offer of a meeting with Bonehill-Paine. Badenoch's suggestion that he would be an unsuitable parliamentary candidate but a suitable local councillor ("I'm not giving him a national platform, he is standing to be a councillor in Somerset ... it is a local platform looking at parking, sorting out bins ... I have much higher thresholds for what it takes to be a Conservative MP") may not have helped.

> When Ted Heath was Tory leader, the party had a million members

Has she dealt with Shapps more deftly? I ask because, when questioned about the decision to bar him from the candidates' list she left little doubt that she wants a new broom that sweeps clean. "I want people to know that this is a new Conservative Party," she said. "It is not going to be making the mistakes of the past. We lost 250 MPs at the last election. We are changing policies, we are changing people, we are changing process." Two points follow.

The first is that Badenoch is treading a familiar path. Tory leaders have a way of seeking to remake the party in their own image, and cracking the whip. David Cameron had his A-list of new candidates. Michael Howard purged Howard Flight, then a member of his front bench, for floating his own ideas rather than sticking to the collective brief. Ted Heath removed Harvey Proctor.

The second is that there has been no revolt by Conservative MPs or party members at the party's treatment of Shapps. If anything, it seems to have gone down well — at least among Badenoch-curious voters who want to see the party offering new leadership and a new look (though she was herself, of course, a minister during those years).

All the same, there is a crucial difference between past and present that can be set out in numbers. When Heath was Tory leader, the party had a million members and, therefore, a social structure that reached deeply into small business, the professions, the City and agriculture. But even then, the party flattered to deceive: in the mid-1950s, membership had been the best part of three million. The wearing away of the old class loyalties and the rise of consumer choice were eating away at the Conservatives and other parties too.

It is commonplace to say that the Tories are no longer a national force — that outside their fastnesses in west London they have diminished electoral clout. But the same is true of Labour outside its own base in the north and east of the capital among some ethnic minorities, younger voters and public-sector workers.

Conservative and Labour leaders are like sultans in the decaying Ottoman Empire, wielding absolute power for as long as they survive but frighteningly vulnerable to the whims of their janissaries. Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer: all were ousted or lost elections. Badenoch's attempt to bend candidates to her will on net zero and Britain's membership of the European Convention on Human Rights should be seen in this light. Ambitious Tories may sign on the dotted line of party policy to get approved as candidates but, once selected for a seat and elected to the Commons, who knows what they would say and do?

JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP

Grant Shapps held five cabinet posts but can't stand for the Tories again

Nor is Reform set to step in to revive the old certainties. Its membership growth is impressive, as is its expansion into local government. But whether its recruits would have the staying power to survive the frustrations and failures of government is questionable. As is whether they are really members, with a say over strategy and policy, rather than supporters.

The decline of political parties as organisations with deep social roots, their fetish for centralised control to compensate for the loss of real sway, and the imperilled condition of their leaderships are combining to send to parliament, in the wake of each general election, a substantial number of bright-eyed new MPs, freshly elected, with little knowledge of Westminster or Whitehall, and marginal seats to defend. Former ministers with experience of both have gone. Their replacements have no memory of mistakes made by previous regimes. This makes it all the more likely that they will repeat them.

> New MPs have no memory of mistakes by previous regimes

They take pride in "not being professional politicians" but, not being so, run short of the skills, wiles, savvy and experience necessary to survive, let alone flourish. The Commons becomes a wheel on which each generation of tyros is broken. There is something to be said for Shapps, after all.

Lord Goodman of Wycombe is a Conservative peer

Fraser Nelson is away

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Ann Treneman Notebook

What's that falling out of the sky? Surely not...

I was typing away in my attic office this week when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw something move. The roof window had what seemed to be tiny spots on it. For a moment I was genuinely puzzled. Surely the window cleaner spray couldn't get this high. Seagull spray? More spots arrived on the pane.

"It's raining rain!" I cried, ungrammatically. For weeks I had watched those little rain clouds on the weather app and the 20 or 30 per cent chance they offer but which, on the day, just vanish. There had been no rain for a month and counting but now, unheralded, a rogue cloud was precipitating. I jumped up and ran down three flights of stairs, feeling quite emotional.

I ran out the front door and into the street. "It's raining!" I shouted, having an urge to do a Julie Andrews *Sound of Music* twirl. One neighbour was equally thrilled. The "rain" was more of a splatter and only lasted five minutes but how fabulous it was to feel those droplets on your face. I sat outside, getting wet. Note to self: Never complain about rain again. Ever.

Backing snacks

The No 10 social media experts (God save us) have told the prime minister he has to be less blokeish. This after an Instagram/TikThing post in which he and the chancellor sat in a pub, in what is now known as the "horizontal drinking position", and rated bar snacks. Apparently the video has garnered five million views, and one of those was me.

It's not going to win an Oscar but I do agree that McCoy's crisps (Burnham's No 1 snack) are special. Yes, it was a bit blokeish, but then they are blokes. Andy, don't listen to them. As a sketchwriter, I observed serial prime ministers become stooges at the hands of their image advisers, pretending to like this or that biscuit, pasty, football team, musician. Having said that: I can hardly wait for the social media post where the prime minister's wife Marie-France van Heel (such a great name) tells him what is what. She's a winner.

Tinkling the ivories

I bought a piano this week. There's a sentence you don't read every day. It is one of those items, like pantries or rotary phones, that used to be common and are now decidedly less so. As a child my neighbour had two pianos, one upright and one player piano. Remember those? With the scrolls and the bouncy music?

It was time, after 18 months of lessons, to graduate from my tinny digital piano. I was worried about finding the right size (small for a very small room) but the fact that no one has a piano any more means there is plenty of stock out there. How marvellous to roam among the Steinways at The Piano Shop, just south of Tunbridge Wells, before settling on a 1978 console made by Kemble, a late great British brand.

Grand scale

The Henry Moore exhibition at Kew Gardens is, as you would expect, mega in every way. A lot of thought has gone into placement and the sheer size of the trees and glasshouses offers a setting as majestic as the works. The fact that the grass is as brown as dust just sets off the sculptures more.

Guilty as charged

My quest for a list of ghastly phrases has hit a snag. "Please will you add 'from the get-go' to your list," asks reader Noel Whittal. "There is simply no possible excuse for it." Oops, hands up, that's one I have used and (gulp) rather like.

@ANNTRENEMAN

Comment

Good for you? My dog put years on me...

I miss my labrador but, from dodging dangerous breeds to eyewatering vets' bills, owning him was no walk in the park

Deborah Ross

@DEBORAHROSS

Pets, we've been constantly told, are good for you. They reduce stress hormones. They reduce loneliness. They boost mental health and oxytocin levels. They offer unconditional love. However, a new study by Switzerland's Basel University — that is, a proper university study rather than one of those surveys that just want to get Pedigree Chum or similar in the papers — says there was no notable difference in the health or psychological wellbeing of those who own pets and those who do not.

They analysed data from 2,328 adults and found that owning a pet did not equate to greater life satisfaction, reduced healthcare use or improved mental wellbeing. A dog, in other words, won't fix your depression. And while a therapist may not necessarily be a better fit, the advantage of therapists is you don't have to feed them, scratch behind their ears, tell them they're a good boy and pick up their poo. Or, if you do, have you checked they are BACP approved? They could have their own mishigas going on here.

I am going to stick to dogs today, not just because they've been the most talked up, in terms of benefits, but because I love dogs. I wonder constantly at the marvel of dogs. The thing they have going with humankind is the most miraculous example of interspecies bonding, surely. As it stands, my algorithms feed me little beyond dogs, dogs, dogs, dogs, Bumpy (that rescued baby hippo) and dogs. There's no life form I like more than *Canis lupus familiaris*. Always pleased to see a little *Hippopotamus amphibious*, yet Bumpy still comes nowhere near.

However, after my last dog died I swore: no more. That's it. I'm done. What this study doesn't come out and say but I will is: a dog increases stress monumentally and takes years off your life.

Let me give you one instance: when you're out walking your dog and a big-bollocked bull breed with a spiky chain collar comes charging towards you while its owner is crying: "Killer, be nice!", that's five years off your life right there. Alternatives, I should point out, also include: "Tyson, be nice!', "Razor, be nice!" and "Rocky, be nice!" Killer, Tyson, Razor or Rocky may well prove nice, even if they do require reminding, but there's no getting those five years back. I once went out for a walk when I was 45 and celebrated my 50th on my return. "That was quick," people said. "Wasn't it," I confirmed.

> No designated chew could compete with the remote or your phone

I miss my dog. I even miss the way he could hear a banana being unpeeled from the top floor. (He was a labrador, needless to say; you can never be a secret eater if there's a labrador on the scene.) But I remember. I remember the puppy years when no designated chew or stinky tripe stick could compete with the remote, the skirting boards, your laptop, your phone, any Amazon parcel and the bottom panel of the back door.

You can never be a secret eater if there's a labrador on the scene

I remember the pitiful crying and the (failed) crate training. I remember the jogger-chasing and the bicycle-chasing and the picnic-raiding (a labrador, remember) and paying people off so they could buy another sandwich. A dog's puppyhood, that'll send your stress hormones though the roof and that alone will take years off your life. It may be that when you went out on that walk at 45 you were only about 37. But looked 45. And felt it.

Should you survive the puppy years, and there is no saying you will, you'll spend the next decade (minimum) being, in effect, a train station controller, always charting who is coming, who is going, who will be around when, for the dog. Are you in next Thursday when I have to be out for the day? "Dunno, mum." The kids who begged to get a dog and talked the talk do not walk the walk, so there's the rage to factor in. And this boosts your mental wellbeing (and oxytocin) how?

Sleeplessness, that's in the mix too. Having to wake at 5am to be on Hampstead Heath by 6am in the summer months to avoid picnickers is, well, no picnic, but essential if you don't want to be chased by someone shouting: "People like you shouldn't be allowed dogs!"*

Plus there are those times you are woken in the middle of the night by the dreaded glg-glg-glg sound, which indicates the dog is about to vomit on the landing. Fair play, at least it's not about to vomit on your sleeping face this time. I'm not saying you can't have good moments too.

The vets' bills, though. Those can do you in altogether. "£750 for a tooth clean?" may be the last words on someone's (blue) lips. (On a side issue, we've allowed private equity to devastate vets' practices, dental practices, water companies, care homes and even children's homes but it's not until they come after football there's an uproar?).

It's not as if you're not worrying even when you're not at the vet. Is the scratching flea-scratching or just scratching-scratching? What's unconditional about this love when he'd follow anyone home for a sausage? What have you got in your mouth? Let me see. Where did you get that? Where's the rest of it? Yet we keep hearing that pets are calming. It's wall to wall anxiety, more like. One person whose dog shot off across a road after a squirrel when she was 58 never felt younger than 87 thereafter.

And here's the worst part: they will die. They have short life spans. They will leave this world way, way too soon. Some will say that because their existence is comparatively fleeting, it adds resonance and a certain beauty, but I really don't want to be the one holding them when they get that injection. That didn't improve my life satisfaction one jot.

> Don't believe the hype. Pets will do you in, one way or another

In effect, this is a love letter to dogs, but someone needed to tell you: while the Basel study gets closer than most, don't believe the hype. Pets will do you in, one way or another.

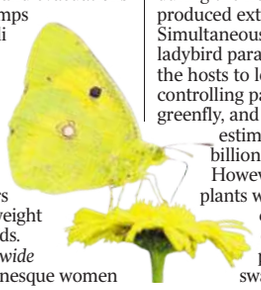
* To those who will inevitably say I should have trained him better, I once hired an extremely expensive one-to-one trainer to see if I could get him less obsessed with food and after ten sessions she said: "No." A pet also equals: yet more 5am starts and yet more money not well spent.

Giles Coren is away

Matthew Oates Nature Notebook

Get ready for Invasion of the Ladybirds — the sequel!

We have been blessed with a goodly number of the commoner ladybirds this summer, at least by modern standards. Appropriately so, as we are 50 years on from the great ladybird invasion of 1976, when swarms of scarlet mini-beetles caused panics on seafronts at Brighton and Weston-super-Mare, and evacuations at Butlin's holiday camps at Minehead, Pwllheli and Skegness. There are accounts of light aircraft disappearing into dense clouds of ladybirds, of yachts sailing through blood-red seas, and of combine harvesters jamming under the weight of ladybirds and aphids. Best was BBC *Nationwide* footage of two Pythonesque women fending off ladybirds with handbags. The ladybirds won.



It was not without precedent, as populations of some insects can erupt like Vesuvius. The Times reported a major influx in Ramsgate, Kent, in August 1869, when "the streets seemed covered in red sand" and workmen were shovelling ladybirds down sewers. Similar happenings had occurred there in 1847. In 1976, ladybirds rampaged over western Europe, tracking vast aphid swarms, which drifted like green smoke across landscapes. The chaos began when the aphids died off in the heat, leaving hordes of starving ladybirds.

The science, proferred by our late professor of ladybirds at Cambridge University, Mike Majerus, holds that populations of seven-spot, two-spot and ten-spot ladybirds boomed during the hot summer of 1975 and produced extra broods. Simultaneously, populations of the ladybird parasites were low, enabling the hosts to leapfrog ahead of their controlling parasites. Add swarms of greenfly, and bingo! One scientific estimate suggests some 23.65 billion ladybirds.

However, aphid-bearing plants wilted in the drought, causing the ladybirds to disperse in search of pastures new. Drifting swarms were then unceremoniously dumped by coastal air currents. There is a serious lesson here. Given the manner in which some insects can exploit favourable conditions and the pace of climatic change, we should recognise the possibility of insect population explosions beside which the benign events of 1976 pale into insignificance.

Seeds of hope

Many of my generation of naturalists morphed into impassioned nature conservationists when we were taught that 97 per cent of our wildflower meadows had been lost since the 1930s. Meadows had been central to our childhoods. That figure of monumental loss is still being bandied about, with some justification. There is, though, a risk of the doom-and-gloom message becoming counterproductive, as it makes people feel helpless. Love, beauty, wonder and success stories can win more converts.

Do nothing is not an answer, and where there is a will there is almost invariably a way. Take the tale of Donald MacIntyre, who founded Emorsgate Seeds back in 1980, renting a single acre of land from Norfolk County Farms. Emorsgate now manages 450 acres of wildflower seed-producing farmland in Norfolk, a 300-acre farm on a steep hillside outside Bath, and has just acquired a 200-acre farm near Chippenham, Wilts: total 950 acres.

Right conditions can bring swarms of ladybirds. Left, clouded yellow butterfly

Most importantly, it has provided seed of grass and herb mixtures for meadowland creation projects, large and small, in every English county. Sited appropriately these new meadows produce quality hay and grazing land, and more seed. They are economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable.

The highlight of my visit to the Bath farm was hearing a farmer say, "Here I drilled an acre of hoary plantain, next to two of field scabious", with all the gravitas of a big arable farmer growing the latest variety of winter wheat.

The farm, profitable, and rich in wildlife, is even richer in love. As Wordsworth so deftly puts it, "What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how".

Ley of the land

Lucerne is making a welcome reappearance, grown alongside clovers and the likes of common bird's-foot-trefoil and sainfoin. These are deep-rooted, nitrogen-fixing plants that restore soil health and fertility, naturally.

These modern "herbal leys", associated with regenerative farming, are extremely good for various insects, notably the common blue butterfly, which has become decidedly uncommon in most districts, having been primarily a meadowland species. These leys are now attracting the clouded yellow, a migrant butterfly from the Mediterranean that has arrived here in numbers this summer, and is set to produce a vast homegrown brood or two.

I counted over 100 magnificent clouded yellows in just over an hour, from lanes bordering leys glowing with purple lucerne. Better, my young grandson reports "loads of clouded yellows" on holiday in Cornwall, "and even more loads of jellyfish!"

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Posturing council can't see culture war is over

Local authorities denying EHRC rules on single-sex services are fighting a losing battle — most of us want to move on

Janice Turner

@VICTORIAPECKHAM

A group of Green Party council leaders clutch two creased, fresh-from-the-box LGBTQ+ progress flags and together recite that old catechism: "Trans women are women, trans men are men". They have solemnly gathered to mourn the dreaded day, August 5, when Equality and Human Rights Commission rules on single-sex services formally came into effect.

Lambeth, Hackney, Haringey, Lewisham, Waltham Forest and Southwark, where I live, pledge to be "sanctuary boroughs" for trans people, although no one explains what this means. Our council leader, James McAsh, a Corbynite defector from Labour who in May forged Southwark's Green-Lib Dem coalition, says that EHRC rules "fundamentally undermine the hard-fought rights of trans and non-binary people to access services with dignity and respect". His bequiffed deputy Victor Chamberlain (he/him, as he styles himself on X), calls the guidance "potentially harmful".

I have questions, both as a journalist and as a Southwark resident who swims at Camberwell's lovely restored Victorian baths. If the council plans to ignore the law, what does it mean for the open-plan female changing rooms where women and girls undress and shower? What about the Tuesday evening women-only sessions, when the pool's outer door is covered to respect the modesty of Muslims who wear burkinis even among their own sex? This is the only time they get to swim. McAsh and Chamberlain give no reassurances and offer no grave words about their privacy and dignity.

I text McAsh who, atypical of the Greens, has actually run council services and is too wily to reply. Instead, his cheery new comms person Eddie calls. The EHRC rules are "confusing and unworkable", he says, and the council will have to sit down and think very, very hard about how to change the physical spaces in its leisure centres so as not to exclude trans people. OK, but in the meantime, what if a male person wants to change with women? What will staff be told to do? "We are considering options ..." But doesn't the code apply now?

In Southwark this question is not so theoretical. Last year, at its Castle leisure centre, a woman who confronted a male person in female changing rooms and reported it to reception had her gym membership revoked. (The trans person kept theirs.) What about Camberwell's women-only swim? "Well, has a trans woman ever asked to attend?" scoffs Eddie. I'd just like to know the policy.

Eddie says he'll speak to leisure services. I say I'd like McAsh himself to tell female residents whether he will comply with the EHRC. Many hours pass, in which great minds at Southwark town hall must be thumbing frantically through Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

> It is entirely feasible for everyone to enjoy swimming and sport

Eventually I call Chamberlain, a Lib Dem and therefore thrilled to be asked his opinion on anything at all. "The code is unworkable in implementation," he says, "we don't have resources we need to deliver this blanket ruling." But isn't it pretty basic? Camberwell baths, like all Southwark's leisure centres, already has a gender neutral space, the family changing section with cubicles so dads can change their toddler daughters. Chamberlain says the council needs more government funding. What for? A new sign?

Six times I ask him whether the women-only swim should be single sex. It's a simple yes/no. All the pool's other sessions are mixed. But he won't be drawn and instead waffles about a cross-party group of MPs to reform the Equality Act's definition of sex.

I mention all this here to show the performative idiocy of this rearguard action against the EHRC. It is entirely feasible for everyone, women and trans people, to enjoy swimming and sport. It requires no more than practical compromises, repurposed spaces, a few more gender neutral loos. But this would mean acknowledging biological sex exists, that sometimes female safety takes precedence over male feelings, and that the mantra "trans women are women" is not literally true.

The Greens — plus some Labour folk and Lib Dems — will never concede this. (Nor will many trans activists, including groups like Bash Back, whose members pledge to defend their right to women's spaces via threats and violence.) They prefer to live in a state of perpetual outrage about the impossibility of something they could instantly solve, even if it means escalating division and fear.

The Labour MP Samantha Niblett, top seed in the 2026 Stella Creasy Attention-Seeker Challenge, declares from her holiday sun lounger that August 5 is a "shit day". She offers no solution to reconciling trans and women's rights, just rails against hateful gender critical feminists to signify that she/her, Niblett, flogger of John Lewis dildos, is among the sainted few.

Yet quietly, organisations from sports bodies to big corporations are adjusting to the EHRC guidance. "The law is the law," said health secretary Yvette Cooper when asked about NHS guidance for single-sex spaces, which she promises will, finally, be published soon.

The law is certainly now a shield for cowards like Cooper who swerved the issue when it came at any political or personal cost. The law will also end upsetting, expensive, interminable court cases pursued by women like the Darlington nurses, who were denied the basic right to undress away from male eyes. No one will police the Camberwell changing rooms, because almost everyone will abide by the rules, but on the rare occasion they don't, women can confidently cite the law.

But maybe Green councils like Southwark regard laws they don't agree with as optional. (If so, I have thoughts about the Local Government Finance Act 1992, under which my council tax is levied.) By my deadline, no one had answered my two questions about women's services. So I messaged Eddie, McAsh and Chamberlain a last time, but a reply from these three he/hims came there none.

Letters to the Editor

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Equitable funding of social care

Sir, I agree with Sharon Tanton (letter, Aug 7) that self-funding residents contribute a disproportionate amount of income for their care fees, but this allows care homes to cover fixed operating costs. Private care homes are businesses and as such operate to make a profit. However, calling self-funding a direct subsidy is perhaps a simplification. Care homes rely on achieving profitability through a joint operating model of filling rooms with both self-funders and those placed by local authorities who are able to negotiate lower placement fees.

I would take issue with Ms Tanton's assertion that other people do not pay for residential care. Unless a service user receives NHS continuing care funding, they will contribute to bed and board charges from their income and capital. Those whose capital is more than £23,250 pay the full cost. But a person on basic pension credit will pay more than £10,000 a year for care (£238 a week pension credit, paying £206.20 a week bed and board charges from their income and keeping only £31.80 a week personal expenditure allowance to buy personal items). An overhaul of care funding to make it more equitable is long overdue

Gerard Friel
Twickenham

Farm fire threat

Sir, We make more than 100 acres of hay on our farm in Dorset, and throughout this year's heatwaves two businesses have continued to burn fires regularly on each side of us: a tip two fields away, and a glamping site just over the hedge from our hay grass and wildlife field margins.

Why is this permitted, when field and heath fires here are widespread, and the risk of fire spreading is so high? Appeals to the authorities are met with a metaphorical shrug of the shoulders, and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service tell me that they have no powers until our fields actually catch alight! We would lose our livelihood, our home and the rich flora and fauna that we cherish.

The law must change — urgently.

Terence Fox
Dorset

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Scrutiny of Cambridge professor's vetting

Sir, Lord Biggar (letter, Aug 7) is quick to jump on the apparent discrepancy between the statistic in Roger Mosey's article that 35 per cent of Cambridge's UK undergraduates come from ethnic minorities, and that only 18 per cent of the overall population do so. However, Department for Education statistics tell us that the figure for the school-age population is rather higher: no less than 38.7 per cent of them now come from ethnic minority backgrounds. This aspect of the demographics of the country is rapidly changing, and Cambridge University's admissions figures have changed to reflect it.

William Hale
Oxhill, Warks

Sir, Journalists being investigated by the police for doing their job is a worrying and dangerous example of state over-reach ("Scotland Yard investigated reporter who probed Arday", Aug 5). Not only is it the job of a journalist to ask questions on matters of public interest, but offering a right of reply to the subject of any allegations made in your work is an essential legal step in reporting. The revelations that the Metropolitan Police investigated the Times Higher Education journalist Jack Grove for doing just that highlights a concerning lack of understanding of the right and role of the press in a democracy.

Akiko Hart, Liberty; **Jonathan Heawood**, Public Interest News Foundation; **Franz Wild,** the Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Sir, One of the main lessons of the Arday affair is the apparent failure to carry out sufficient checks on his CV. As public appointments commissioner (2016-21), I was often struck by how some potentially damaging aspect of a candidate's record was not revealed or examined at the assessment stage. Rigorous due diligence should be automatic, but interviewers were too often reluctant to press what I called the embarrassment question: is there anything in your background that could damage you or the position you seek to hold? Perhaps it is something in the British character that we dislike awkward situations. But the cost of subsequent disclosures is far greater.

Sir Peter Riddell
London NW5

Sir, The furore about Professor Jason Arday's alleged plagiarism does not surprise me. I was a part-time student at Cambridge between 2021 and 2023, studying for a Masters degree in history. My firm view, based on my personal experience, was that in some cases compliance with a "woke" agenda trumped evidence-based research. We were told to read a book that accused Britain of "terror bombing" in a campaign in Somaliland in 1920. I pointed out in class that this description was not consistent with extensive primary source evidence such as war diaries and contemporary photographic evidence held in institutions such as the National Archives, or the technical capabilities of the aeroplanes involved (one of which is on view at Duxford). I was told by a professor of history that I was "advancing an alternative narrative".

Robert Coyle
Dorking, Surrey

Sir, Reading about the continuing Cambridge controversy, Roy Campbell's lines in his 1931 poem *The Georgiad* came to my mind: "where pumpkins to professor are promoted and turnips into parliament are voted".

Rosemarie Bromley
London SW15

Halting migration

Sir, I am amazed at the naivety of Tom Kelly, a former prime minister's official spokesman (letter, Aug 6). Of course it would be wonderful if migration could be eased by making countries people are fleeing from so successful that they could live a decent life there. What Mr Kelly seems to have overlooked is that most of these countries are run either by corrupt dictators or militaries, and whatever investment is ploughed in ends not in benefiting the people but in a few individual pockets. Also, no doubt, the "West" would be chastised for "interfering" in Africa and brandished "colonialist" by progressive voices.

Anthony Latter
London NW3

Sir, William Hague is right that border enforcement alone is not an effective policy: we must reduce the insecurity and deprivation that drive people from their homes in the first place. As a British Army commander, I saw the human misery created by conflict and instability. The absence of security and opportunity leaves communities vulnerable to displacement, violence and radicalisation.

The Halo Trust clears landmines and other explosives from conflict-affected countries, helping to create the conditions for stability, enabling families to return home safely, farmers to reclaim their land, and communities to rebuild their economies. We also work with governments to secure and destroy illicit weapons, reducing the risk of renewed violence in fragile states. In effect, we help tackle the "upstream" causes of migration. This is not simply humanitarian assistance. A sustained commitment to building peace and stability overseas is vital to our security at home.

Major general (ret'd) James Cowan
Chief executive, the Halo Trust

Kemi controversy

Sir, We all make mistakes; Kemi Badenoch made one in allowing the former neo-Nazi Joshua Bonehill-Paine to contest the Crewkerne South ward of Somerset council ("Former neo-Nazi who harassed MP aborts Tory election bid", Aug 6). Honourable people apologise and right the wrong. Badenoch, however, offered him a job as an anti-extremism adviser to the Conservative Party. Perhaps she thought it would be a sign of weakness if she said sorry, but by not doing so she has most probably lost the Jewish vote, including mine. Is saving face worth antagonising and distressing a whole community? I think not.

Peter Phillips
Loudwater, Herts

No laughing matter

Sir, It is nearly 20 years since the murder of Meredith Kercher, yet the publicity about it has never ended. Amanda Knox, who was convicted, and then acquitted, of her murder, has published two books and there have been two documentaries on the subject. Now Knox plans to present a comedy, *Cartwheel*, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, reviving yet again memories of Meredith's murder. She appears to show no understanding of the family's objections ("Dismay at Amanda Knox comedy show", Aug 7). She should think again. Both the living and the dead deserve respect.

Rod Dadak
Hawkley, Hants

MISS EDERLE ASTONISHES THE WORLD

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 9, 1926

By this time the whole world knows the astonishing particulars of Miss Gertrude Ederle's great Channel swim. They are astonishing because of Miss Ederle's age and sex — she is the first woman to swim the Channel and she is not nineteen years old — and because of the time, much less than that of any of her five predecessors, she was in the water.

To say that she must have had good luck is true only up to a point. All who try to swim the Channel rely on fair weather and an opportune tide to help them, whether they start from England like Webb, Burgess and Sullivan, or from France, like Tiraboschi, Toth and Miss Ederle. But it seems certain that Miss Ederle owed her success almost entirely to her excellence as a swimmer. Her pace seems to have been exceptionally strong and fast throughout; otherwise there could be no accounting for her having taken only 14 hours and 39 minutes for the feat, when her nearest rival took nearly two hours more. She is the Camilla of Channel swimmers.

The wonderful powers of recuperation possessed by Miss Ederle were shown by the fact that within a dozen hours of her arriving at Dover, on completing her swim across the Channel, she was enjoying a swim at Dover. She was warmly congratulated by the Mayor and Mayoress on her success, and they afterwards accompanied her to the memorial to Captain Webb on the sea front, where a photograph of Miss Ederle was taken alongside the Memorial, forming an interesting picture of the first man and the first woman to swim across the Channel.

Miss Ederle had left Cape Grisnez on Friday, at 7.45am, in fair weather, with William Burgess, her trainer, in a tug, accompanied by her father and sister and Mr Coeta, organiser of this and other swims. Just after 2 o'clock the South Goodwin lightship could be seen with the naked eye, and she was then in splendid spirits. At 8 o'clock she was one mile from the shore, and was going as strong as ever. At 8.45 half a gale was blowing. Now came the crisis, and it was wondered whether Miss Ederle would cheat the tide or be swept off from the shore. But at five minutes past 9 she stepped on to land near Kingsdown lifeboat station and ran up the beach.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Walking stick rules

Sir, I have recently started walking with the aid of a walking stick (letters, Aug 7). I quickly found that a definite pedestrian hierarchy has developed on busy pavements. I was surprised to find that almost all pedestrians give way kindly to me; even approaching groups of boisterous boys swaggering along part graciously to let me through. But we walking stick users give way to pram or buggy users, and everyone gives way to wheelchair users, who in turn are careful to make room for the visually impaired. Even dogs seem to follow this code. It is only occasionally that a rogue bike rider on the pavement makes everyone get out the way pretty smartly.

Geoffrey Paradise
London N2

Vertical drinking

Sir, Westminster council's proposed ban on "vertical drinking" reminds of being in the Antico Caffè Greco near the Spanish Steps in Rome. I ordered a drink and noticed that the price charged was about twice the menu price. When I asked why, I was told: "Sir, the menu price is to drink standing up. You are sitting down."

Far from being concerned, publicans should welcome this brilliant move by the council as an outstanding commercial opportunity.

Stephen Gold
London N21

Grace and favour

Sir, In these straitened times, perhaps the government could raise some much-needed money by selling Chequers, Chevening, Admiralty House and Dorneywood etc ("Haigh will not grace Admiralty residence", news, Aug 6). The cost of running and staffing these vast houses must be immense, and the benefit of keeping them for occasional use is negligible and questionable.

Greg Jones
Marlow, Bucks

Open all hours

Sir, I can reassure the Rev John Craig ("Close churches", letter, Aug 4) that all is not lost. In common with many other churches in the New Forest and in the Diocese of Winchester, our beautiful, ancient church of St John the Baptist, Boldre, is open seven days a week. This has attracted positive comments from our many visitors, whom we try to make most welcome.

Christopher Knox
Churchwarden; Everton, Hants

Reservoir of doubt

Sir, Further to the letter (Aug 7) suggesting a pipeline from the "well-supplied north" to the "rainless south", a far better solution is for those water companies in the south to build more reservoirs and fix their leaks, rather than take water from areas that had the foresight to build reservoirs in anticipation of industrial need (as with Kielder Water).

Kaeti Seth
Humshaugh, Northumberland

Welsh classics

Sir, Retitling films for the Welsh market is a fine idea (letters, Aug 6 & 7). It may need editing somewhat, but may I suggest *Last Tango in Powys*?

Olwen Davis
Castlemorris, Pembrokeshire

Daily Universal Register

The RMT union begins a strike on East Midlands Railway over safety concerns. A reduced train service to and from London St Pancras is expected; Blackpool airshow.

Birthdays today

Chris Eubank, *pictured*, former world champion boxer, 60; **General Lloyd Austin**, US secretary of defence (2021-25), 73; **Princess Beatrice**, 38; **Dame Amanda Blanc**, chief executive, Aviva (insurance), 59; **Keith Carradine**, actor, *Nashville* (1975), singer-songwriter, *I'm Easy* (1975), 77; **Alex Chalk KC**, lord chancellor and justice secretary (2023-24), Conservative MP for Cheltenham (2015-24), 50; **Ruth Chepng'etich**, long-distance runner, women's marathon world record holder (2:09:56, Chicago, 2024), 32; **Sarah Dunant**, novelist, *Fatlands* (1993), 76; **David "The Edge" Evans**, guitarist, U2, *The Joshua Tree* (1987), 65; **Roger Federer**, tennis player, eight-time Wimbledon men's singles champion (2003-07, 2009, 2012, 2017), 45; **Richard Harwood**, cellist, 47; **Dustin Hoffman**, actor, *The Graduate* (1967), *Kramer vs Kramer* (1979), 89; **Nigel Mansell**, racing driver, Formula One world drivers' champion (1992), IndyCar champion (1993), 73; **Hannah Miley**, swimmer, world short-course champion (2012), 37; **Prof Sir Roger Penrose OM**, mathematician, Nobel prizewinner in physics (2020) and author, *The Road to Reality* (2004), 95; **Simon Weston**, Falklands conflict veteran and charity fundraiser, 65; **Kane Williamson**, cricketer, former captain of the New Zealand national team, 36.

Birthdays tomorrow

Gillian Anderson, *pictured*, actress, *The X-Files* (1993-2002, 2016, 2018), 58; **Eric Bana**, actor, *Troy* (2004), 58; **Prof Hugh Brady**, physician-scientist, president, Imperial College London, 67; **Sam Elliott**, actor, *A Star Is Born* (2018), 82; **Melanie Griffith**, actress, *Working Girl* (1988), 69; **John Hirst**, chairman, British Standards Institution, Anglian Water (2015-24), chief executive, Met Office (2007-14), 74; **Roy Hodgson**, football manager, Crystal Palace (2017-21, 2023-24), England (2012-16), 79; **Anna Kendrick**, actress, *Up in the Air* (2009), 41; **Sir John Key**, prime minister of New Zealand (2008-16), 65; **Tim Knox**, art historian, director of the Royal Collection, director, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (2013-18), 64; **Rod Laver**, Australian tennis player, Wimbledon men's singles winner (1961, 1962, 1968, 1969), 88; **Lisa Nandy**, digital, culture, media and sport secretary, Labour MP for Wigan, 47; **Posy Simmonds**, cartoonist and writer, *Tamara Drewe* (2005-06), 81; **John Simpson**, world affairs editor, BBC, and writer, *Our Friends in Beijing* (2021), 82; **Djed Spence**, footballer, Tottenham Hotspur FC and England, 26; **Audrey Tautou**, actress, *Amélie* (2001), *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), 50; **Sir Mark Weinberg**, co-founder and life president, St James's Place Wealth Management, 95; **Tom Weldon**, chief executive, Penguin Random House UK, 63.

On this day

In **1970** Toki, a southern resident orca, was captured. She spent nearly 53 years at the Miami Seaquarium until her death shortly before a planned release.

The last word

"Happiness quite unshared can scarcely be called happiness — it has no taste." Charlotte Brontë, novelist, in a letter (1850)

Build for Britain

Both main parties' proposals on social housing bypass the problem of inadequate supply of private accommodation. Shortages can only be eased by freeing up land

Britain's housing market is dysfunctional. High prices and rents pressure living standards and impede labour mobility. In his first set-piece speech as prime minister, Andy Burnham last month pledged to "oversee the biggest council house-building programme since the postwar period". While the aim of fixing a broken market is sound, the proposed means are questionable. Further queries arise from the Conservatives' proposal to bar foreign nationals from social housing. Both parties evade the deeper problem of an inadequate supply of affordable private-sector housing.

The Tories argue that about 230,000 homes could be released if foreign nationals were no longer eligible for social housing. Currently, foreign nationals with settled status, refugee status or other eligibility under certain humanitarian criteria do indeed qualify. Under the Tory proposal, any person in social housing who is not a UK or EU citizen would be rendered ineligible and would have to move out of their home within six months.

As a long-term plan, it is unexceptionable to reserve future social housing for UK nationals or those with EU settled status. But there is a problem with legislation that is retrospective and that would require residents in social housing, including parents with children, to vacate council property. That would aggravate social divisions and surely be defeated on judicial challenge.

It also targets the wrong demographic of residents. The problem is not primarily that foreign nationals crowd out domestic applicants. A more pressing issue is that too many people are granted access to social housing in perpetuity, whether they remain in financial need of it or not. Some 440,000 such households are in the richest 40 per cent for income, making use of a system that rewards those entrenched in social housing by minimising their rental costs. A bargain property for life cannot be justified for each household.

Compared to similar nations, the UK does not suffer from an acute under supply of social housing. Around 16 per cent of the housing stock in England, comprising some four million households, is owned by local authorities or housing associations — more than in any other G7 economy. Although the UK has a high level of social relative to private-sector housing, its deeper problem is the lack of means-testing of residents. There should also be greater safeguards against abuses of the system, such as subletting social properties.

Limiting eligibility, as the Tories and Reform UK both suggest, may help reduce the 1.3 million-strong waiting list for council housing. But it will not resolve the deeper mismatch between supply and demand. Mr Burnham has stated his bold ambition to better his predecessor's pledge of building 300,000 "social and affordable homes" over the next decade. Labour has promised to build 1.5 million new homes of all types by the end of this parliament, a target the government is likely to miss.

There is a generational divide: older owner-occupiers who have paid off mortgages have no incentive to downsize. Younger families struggle to find space, given the high level of rents. Populist proposals for rent controls, advocated by the Greens and allowable for local authorities in Scotland but rejected by Angela Rayner, the reinstalled housing secretary, are no solution. These would ensure scarcity in the supply and quality of private rental accommodation, as landlords would remove their properties from the marketplace.

The only enduring solution is to stop tinkering with the demand side of the equation and address the fundamental problem: a lack of housing supply in the private sector, whose growth is constrained by onerous planning restrictions. Too many governments have failed to appropriately relax red tape, a move vital for making housing more plentiful and affordable for all. That is what Labour and the other parties should focus their energies on.

Defend Ukraine

Kyiv is under missile attack. Nato must swiftly enable it to build Patriot interceptors

Vladimir Putin is not winning his war to obliterate Ukraine. Even so, Kyiv currently lacks the means effectively to defend its cities from Russian missile attack. That weakness was cruelly exposed on Wednesday, when an overnight attack on the capital killed 17 people. Kyiv cannot prevent these assaults because its stocks of US-made Patriot interceptors are exhausted. Nato, above all the United States, should move urgently to replenish them.

The facts of Ukraine's vulnerability are clear. It has the ability to deal with drones, but is now largely defenceless against Russian missiles. The Patriot air defence system has been integral to Ukraine's defence in this war. Yet, compounded by President Trump's war against Iran, stockpiles have rapidly depleted.

Russian incursions are increasingly brazen against Nato countries too. The independent International Institute for Strategic Studies warned last month of a sustained drone campaign in European airspace. A device containing explosives was targeted at a Ukrainian cargo plane at Leipzig airport in Germany this week. It is reasonable to infer that Russia was behind this activity.

At the Nato summit in Ankara last month, Mr Trump undertook to give Ukraine the licence to build its own Patriot interceptors. He repeated the pledge to President Zelensky in Washington last week. Yet he then reversed his position, saying: "Now, we have not agreed to that. We're talking about it. But it's a hard thing to give away that kind of technology." Whether Mr Trump has been subject to Russian pressure or internal dissent within his administration is unclear. But Nato allies, including Britain, should try to persuade the US to honour its original pledge. The lives of Ukrainian civilians are at stake. And it has to be the Patriot.

This system, manufactured by RTX and Lockheed Martin, was first developed more than 35 years ago. It was tested, and proved its worth, in the Gulf War of 1990-91, and retains its technological superiority. Though several European countries, including Britain, have signed weapons licensing agreements with Kyiv, Patriots are what it needs to defend its airspace. Kyiv has already amply demonstrated in this conflict that it has the capacity in industry and ordnance development to ramp up production. It just needs the technology.

This is little to ask of Nato powers. Though Mr Trump's return to office in 2024 appeared, on the face of it, an opportunity for Mr Putin to divide Nato from Ukraine, the alliance has broadly held together. Mr Trump has admittedly not approved any significant aid packages beyond those of the Biden administration, but the US provides crucial intelligence to Kyiv and maintains sanctions on Russia. European countries have rightly given Ukraine military and economic aid. And Russia has since suffered colossal losses on the battlefield.

Contrary to a hardy and pernicious myth in some US political circles, Mr Zelensky is not some mendicant constantly wheedling for resources. He is a brave man who leads a proud and historic nation engaged in a just war of self-defence. Mr Zelensky has never hesitated to express his people's gratitude for support, nor does his government ask for others to fight on Ukraine's behalf. It seeks only the means to defend its people and its sovereignty, and to reverse Mr Putin's criminal campaign of imperialist aggression. Nato countries should unstintingly give Ukraine and its armed forces the tools, and they will finish the job.

Banter Ban

Andy Burnham's aides are right to say his blokiness should be reined in

British prime ministers have long relished their moments of public theatre, assisted by costumes and props. Harold Wilson famously favoured his man-of-the-people Gannex mac, and bought time to answer questions by fiddling with his pipe. Boris Johnson was often observed pre-rumpling his blond mop before television appearances. It is, in its way, a form of curated authenticity.

Andy Burnham knows the potency of image, and has chosen one that might fairly be titled "Northern Bloke". The preferred setting for this persona is the pub, in which Mr Burnham has recently been seen on social media pulling a pint for the chancellor, John Healey, and engaging with him in a game of "rate the bar snack". Fond subjects include Everton football chat and the wide range of UK dialect words for a bread roll — which Mr Burnham insists is a "barm" — to illustrate the folly of centralising power in London as he attested, "I know what it's like to be ignored by politicians in Westminster".

Now it appears No 10's social media experts have advised Mr Burnham to cut down on his laddish pub and football references, to cultivate a broader appeal. This is sensible. Yes, Mr Burnham is Liverpool-born, grew up near Warrington and until recently was mayor of Greater Manchester. But he has his Southern side too, and has done his stint among the metropolitan elites. He graduated from Cambridge, lived for a decade in London and spent 16 years at the heart of Westminster politics.

Although social media is useful for direct communications to voters, a diet of banter can turn sour when a prime minister must, inevitably, make unpopular choices. Although few would wish to see this aspect of Mr Burnham became extinct, if the greater-spotted Northern Bloke persona were exchanged for the lesser-spotted, rarer glimpses would surely be all the more charming.

Comment

Write to Feedback by emailing feedback@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Not mushroom for error with our expert solvers

Mick Hodgkin
Feedback

@TIMESFEEDBACK

The puzzles desk got zero marks in Biology for 5 down in Monday's Times Crossword, "She reduced space for psychedelic plant (6)", to which the answer was SHROOM [SH(e) + ROOM]. A number of solvers confessed to never having heard of this word, listed in Collins as "short for magic mushroom", but the main complaint was not about whether solvers should be expected to know rave culture drug slang.

"I realise that it must irritate setters to have errors pointed out to them," wrote Peter Cowling of the Mid-Yorks Fungi Group. "After all, they do put great effort into giving us our daily brain workout." There was, of course, a "but" coming. Peter felt compelled to point out that "mushrooms are not plants. They belong to their own separate taxonomic kingdom."

Well, blow me down with a fungal spore. I am pretty sure that in the Seventies when I did mushrooms in biology (by which I mean when I studied them) fungi were plants. But apparently Carl Linnaeus's 18th-century classification was overturned as long ago as 1969, when the US ecologist Robert Whittaker proposed separating fungi into their own distinct kingdom.

I assured Peter that we welcome having errors pointed out, especially early in the day when we can at least correct the online version for later solvers.

Ref sees red

No sooner had we been ticked off for this mycological misclassification than we received a red card from an actual referee for perceived foul play in a Quizle question — or rather, the forms of answer allowed.

"The invention of which two items was inspired by traffic lights on Kensington High Street?", our interactive quiz game asked on Tuesday. Our answer was "Red and yellow cards". We also permitted a long list of other ways of phrasing the answer, with the colours in either order, but not enough for Bob Merrilees.

"For pity's sake... get some bloody flexibility in your answers", he wrote. "I put... Yellow and red cards for football refs (WRONG!) Then, Yellow & Red cards (WRONG!) Then Red & Yellow cards (WRONG!) Does the ampersand not count in your little world, or putting Yellow and Red Cards (the order in which they might be shown) instead of the other way around?

"Apparently not ... presumably they have to be in the order you put 'cos that's the order in which Ken Aston invented them.

"From qualified referee, so you lot get an automatic red for deliberate foul play."

We added Bob's variations, and those offered by several other solvers, and have belatedly instructed the system to recognise "&" as equivalent to "and".

As for the red card, I have asked a gentleman in Washington to ask a gentleman in Zurich to intercede on our behalf.

Pretty painful Poly

Protests about Polygon continue to divide into "why didn't you include this perfectly good word" and "how can I be expected to know this ridiculously absurd word". Ross Glanfield was moved to write by a recent puzzle whose answers included "eclose" (to come out of the egg or pupa case), "socle" (a plinth) and "loess" (a loamy deposit found in river valleys).

"About half the words would never be used in everyday life," he wrote. "It is disappointing when a puzzle wastes your time because the setter is trying too hard to be clever."

We certainly don't try to be clever or to bamboozle solvers. Our word list is taken from the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, chosen as it has fewer obscurities than other dictionaries. And Polygon is an unusual puzzle in that you don't have to finish it to enjoy it. While some solvers may aim for a full house, others may have their own personal target — to get to Good, or Very Good, or just to get the Polygram (the word using all the letters given).

To acknowledge this, we have introduced a Submit button to our online Polygon. If you have found as many words as you think you are going to, you can tap the button with an arrow on it to stop playing and register your score. This allows you to get your Bronze, Silver, Gold or Diamond badge and track your performance over time.

Tickled by Picle

It is heartening to hear that our online archive geo-guessing game Picle has been sparking fond or poignant memories for solvers.

"I very much enjoyed today's Picle because I was actively involved in the redevelopment of the West Street shelter hall in 2016-17," Ian Sowerby emailed in response to a recent photo challenge. The picture showed Peter Mandelson arriving at the Labour conference in Brighton in 2009, with an octagonal building in the background which we identified as: "Shelter Hall, built in the 1880s to provide shelter and refreshments for local fishermen and since refurbished and repurposed on several occasions".

The building in the photo, Ian explained, was not just refurbished in 2017, it was dismantled and re-erected further along the promenade, which I fear will have bamboozled many solvers without his personal connection to the site.

Helen Francis had a thrill of recognition when she clicked on a Picle of Chester in 1989 and saw her late mother among a crowd of shoppers in the city centre. "I was looking at my mother as she once was, healthy, confident and full of life," she told Times Radio, "smiling and looking happy."

We might need to look at awarding extra points for anyone who can identify friends or relatives in Picle — or even themselves.

Mick Hodgkin is puzzles editor

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Time for mad dogs and Englishmen to move to the rhythm of the Med

Rob Hutton

It's almost a century since Noël Coward informed us that while the Japanese don't care to, and the Chinese wouldn't dare to, mad dogs and Englishmen insist on going out in the midday sun. But as our green and pleasant land turns brown and dusty, we need to face the reality that this is no longer true: we're a Mediterranean country now.

It's not just that you can catch octopus off Cornwall. When was the last time you popped home because you realised you'd forgotten your umbrella? Last week I travelled 300 miles across England by train without even taking a jumper. I'm writing this in shorts, sitting on the pavement outside a café like I'm in Cannes or Cordoba, not Kent.

Unusually, Westminster has been ahead of the nation in adopting the ways of the southern European. It's not just that we've had six prime ministers in the past ten years to Italy's five. One of our opposition parties is struggling to explain why it has given a job to a former Nazi and another has financial arrangements that could politely be described as "complicated". Nigel Farage even has, Silvio Berlusconi-style, a tame TV channel.

It's time for the rest of us to up our game. If Britain is going to have Mediterranean politics and a Mediterranean climate, we should set about delivering to Derbyshire and Manchester the things we'd expect to find in the Dordogne and Madrid.

Let's start with converting our town centres to allow games of boules to be played in the street by incredibly skilled old men. Indeed we will, in these new times, have to ask much more from Britain's aged in return for their triple-locked pensions. Women over 70 will have to stand outside their houses staring suspiciously at strangers, while their husbands will be required to grow moustaches and sit in the square all day sipping tiny red drinks.

The winter fuel payment will be replaced by deliveries of olive oil from the verdant groves of Middlesbrough. Every village will have to have a daily heated discussion, involving much gesticulation, that looks like it's about to involve violence but will turn out to be neighbours greeting each other and discussing the beautiful weather.

There'll be a change in our national food. Who can face fish and chips or a Sunday roast in this heat? Most important, it's time to abolish the British croissant. This rubbery product, which never goes off and exists mainly to upset French visitors, has had its day. Now we need to be able to walk up the road to a bakery every morning to get warm, flaky croissants that melt in the mouth. If the price is baguettes that go hard in the time it takes to get home, so be it.

Drivers will be required to trade in their oversized Range Rovers for Vespas, and white vans will be banned in favour of those little three-wheeled Piaggios that can negotiate any corner. Though not in the middle of the day: if this heat continues, we'll have to ask how much longer the British can continue to, as Coward put it, detest a siesta.

And finally there's sport. Our cricket pitches may be suffering, but there's hope elsewhere. Perhaps our country can finally have a football team that can do sneaky European things like "beat Argentina".

Bond is the agent who keeps MI6 on top

Britain's secret service still inspires admiration as well as suspicion — it even scooped the 'Eurovision Spy Contest'

Ben Macintyre

@BENMACINTYRE1

Britain has triumphed in what intelligence officers are already wryly calling the "Eurovision Spy Contest". A peer review by 60 professional spies from 25 countries rated MI6 (formally the Secret Intelligence Service, SIS) as the most powerful and effective foreign intelligence service in Europe, with 251 points. The survey, by the French magazine L'Express, found that an overwhelming majority of spooks rated the British secret service as the standout leader in recruiting foreign agents and penetrating the regimes of China, Russia and Iran.

France's Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) ranked a distant second (169 points). Slovakia came last, voted the most hopeless spy agency in Europe, with nul points.

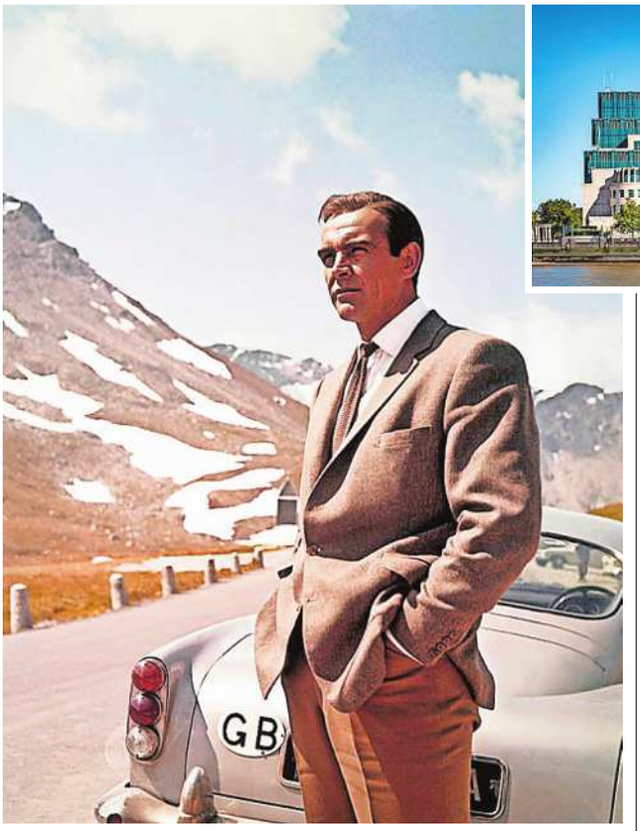
The winner's trophy is only partly deserved. MI6 has pulled off some spectacular espionage operations over the decades, but it has also experienced more than its share of internal treachery. Spies like Kim Philby and George Blake wormed their way inside MI6 and almost destroyed it, inflicting a collective nervous breakdown on the service from which it has never fully recovered. *Nobody Does it Better*. And at times, nobody cocks it up more comprehensively.

But in the estimation of other spy agencies, both friendly and hostile, MI6 continues to inspire admiration, fascination, enmity and emulation, for reasons that are historical, partly mythical and mostly valid, reflecting a talent for espionage skulduggery that is embedded in our national character.

One of the French officers interviewed in the survey rightly pointed to Britain's imperial history as the root of MI6's success. With decolonisation, MI6 inherited a highly effective intelligence network from MI5, the imperial security service. Maintaining and building on those relationships was a central plank of intelligence planning, yielding huge dividends during the Cold War and after. As the intelligence historian Calder Walton writes in *Empire of Secrets*, "Britain's scattering of former colonial dependencies, from Cyprus to Hong Kong, acted as staging posts for intelligence operations."

In the early 1990s, Sir Robert Fellowes, private secretary to the Queen, asked Sir Gerry Warner, the deputy chief of MI6, "What shall I tell Her Majesty her SIS is for?" The veteran spymaster replied: "Please tell her, it is the last penumbra of her Empire." It still is. The "Five Eyes", the world's most important international intelligence alliance, made up of the UK, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, is partly the anglophone legacy of imperial rule.

Formed in July 1909 as the Foreign Section of the Secret Service Bureau, MI6 is the oldest continuously surviving intelligence service in the world. The US did not even operate a foreign secret service ("Gentlemen don't read each other's mail," one state department chief declared loftily) until 1942, when Britain helped the US to build the Office of Strategic Services, which eventually evolved into the CIA. French espionage has often relied on corruption, blackmail and assassination (*opérations homo*, for homicide). For much of the last century, German intelligence was an oxymoron.



DONALDSON COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

Sean Connery as James Bond helped create useful propaganda for MI6, above. Below, the traitor Kim Philby

The British intelligence service has always deliberately recruited what Winston Churchill called "corkscrew minds", gifted amateurs, eccentrics, lateral thinkers, writers and, inevitably, a number of lunatics, con artists, traitors and crooks. Victory in two world wars depended, in part, on the black arts of deception, forgery, fraud and eavesdropping: the Enigma intercepts, the invasion of Sicily and the D-Day landings were all underpinned by the machinations of spies.

Churchill believed Britain had a natural aptitude for espionage. "Tangle within tangle, plot and counter-plot, ruse and treachery, cross and double-cross, true agent, false agent, double agent, gold and steel, the bomb, the dagger and the firing party... interwoven in many a texture so intricate as to be incredible and yet true."

In the 1970s, intelligence chiefs drew up a report for the Defence Deception Advisory Group, which concluded that the British are natural deceivers. "There is a considerable difference in national characteristics between the US and UK ... It's almost a way of life for a UK citizen to use guile in almost all dealings with fellow human beings, whether friend or foe. For the British ... it could be said that the inclination to deceive is already available as a natural asset."

Britain's adversaries still hold MI6 in high, and sometimes exaggerated, esteem. Russia sees MI6's hidden hand everywhere, ever since the British intelligence officer Robert Bruce Lockhart was sent to try to sabotage the Bolshevik revolution in 1918. Vladimir Putin nurses a particular loathing for those KGB officers successfully recruited by Britain during the Cold War, and periodically tries to murder them.

In Iran, suspicion and admiration of British intelligence run even deeper, dating back to the Great Game, when imperial Britain tussled with tsarist Russia for influence in the region, and the 1953 Mossadegh coup, the MI6-CIA plot to oust the elected prime minister. The very word "Inglis" denotes cunning and deception.

But there is one figure above all responsible for MI6's enduring reputation around the world and that is Bond: James Bond. Alongside its real spies, Britain's fictional secret agents are the most memorable in the world: 007, Smiley, Ashenden, *Our Man in Havana*, each created by authors — Ian Fleming, John le Carré, Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene — who had themselves served as intelligence officers.

Bond remains a most effective propaganda tool, global brand and recruiting sergeant. The late MI6 chief Sir Alex Younger once joked that Bond would not have passed the recruitment tests today since he lacks a moral core, yet he frequently alluded to the fictional secret agent in speeches and conversation.

France now has its own screen answer to Bond, with *Le Bureau des légendes*, a Gallic take on the screen thriller with additional existential angst and better food. Since the first season aired in 2016, applications to join the DGSE have rocketed: last year 15,000 candidates vied for fewer than two dozen places on the French intelligence training course.

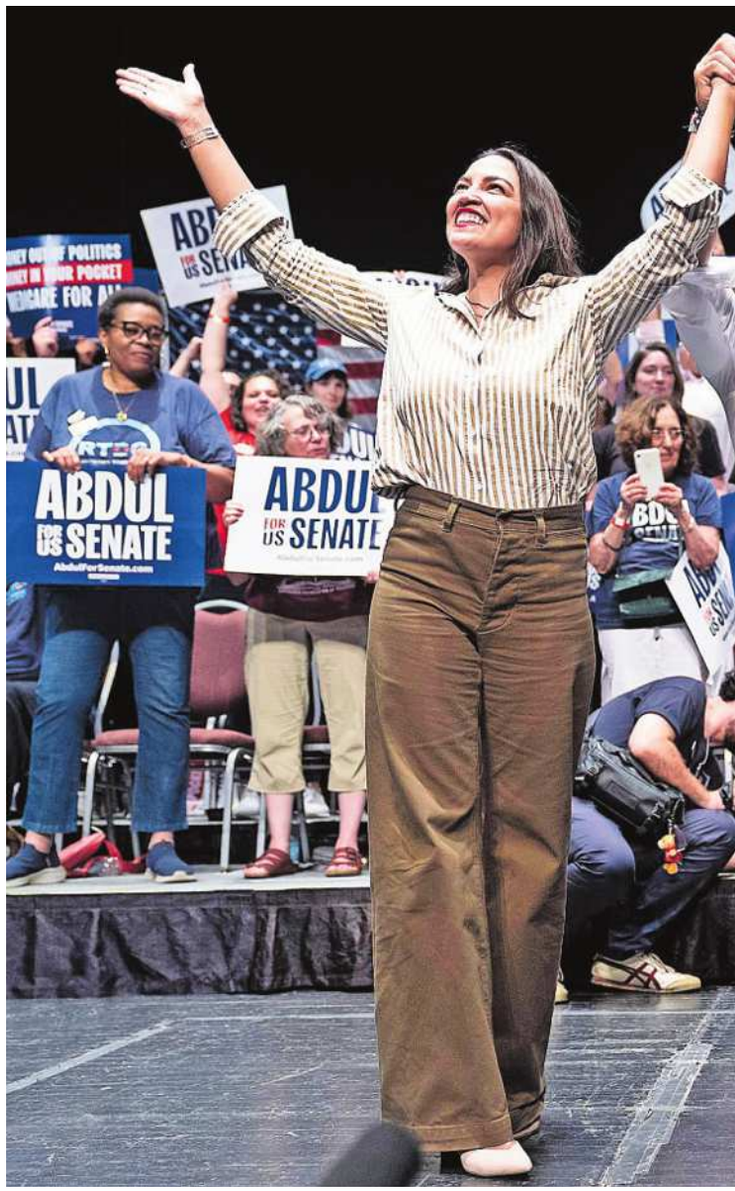
The lesson for international espionage is clear: Slovakia needs a hit TV spy series, and fast.

Comment

WEEKEND ESSAY

Rise of the reds: how Americans got the taste for socialism

Radical Democrats are winning elections by vowing to curb capitalism, a lurch to the left unprecedented in the land of the free. After seizing the initiative within their party, can they exploit voter anger to claim power, asks **Gerard Baker**



The great thing about America, Winston Churchill is supposed to have said, is that it can always be relied upon to do the right thing — but only after it has exhausted every other alternative. Perhaps he had it the wrong way round. After two and a half centuries of developing the world's most successful and dynamic form of democratic capitalism, has the US decided it's time to try an alternative economic and political model? After a decade of ascendant right-wing populism, is the next move for a politically restive country a lurch to the left? After Donald Trump, could the next improbable, riotously hirsute icon of radical change for Americans really be ... Karl Marx?

Three decades after much of the world buried it, socialism is suddenly in vogue in the least likely of places: the land of the free. The Democratic Party, often regarded in the rest of the West as a purveyor of milquetoast, don't-frighten-the-horses, centre-left liberalism, seems to be in the grip of a socialist revolution. Across the country, left-wing party activists who proudly identify as democratic socialists are winning elections for local, state and national office. These candidates favour a significantly expanded role for the state, punitive taxes on the wealthy, universal healthcare, the public ownership of key industries and wholesale constitutional reform to streamline the execution of socialist objectives. They also want a radical shift in US foreign policy to explicitly champion a "decolonisation" agenda, most importantly in shifting US support away from Israel, whose current wars they condemn as genocide, towards explicit support for Palestinians.

So far most of the gains have come within the Democratic Party itself, with socialists winning primary elections to be the party's nominees in November's crucial midterm elections. It remains to be seen whether the wider American electorate is ready to wrap itself in the red flag. But a fight is on for the soul of the main left-of-centre political party in the US, and the evidence is that the socialists have the upper hand.

On Tuesday, the long marchers of the left achieved perhaps their most significant advance yet. Abdul El-Sayed won the Democratic primary election in Michigan for the US Senate. Sayed, a public health professional, a Rhodes Scholar who wrote his Oxford DPhil thesis on socioeconomic inequalities in obesity risk in England, narrowly defeated Haley Stevens, a member of Congress for the past eight years and the standard bearer of the mainstream centrist establishment of the Democratic Party.

Sayed's win followed the victory last November of Zohran Mamdani in New York City's mayoral race and the triumph of several democratic socialists in congressional primaries in Maine, New Jersey and Colorado. Sayed is not formally a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the party within a party that has seized the momentum among Democrats, and he insists he believes in capitalism. But he eagerly aligns himself with the socialists on all the key issues of tax, spending, public ownership, foreign policy and the rest.

His win is the most significant yet because it came not in a heavily Democratic stronghold such as New York or in urban congressional districts with long histories of radical politics but in a statewide contest in a key swing state. Michigan voted twice for Donald Trump and is a critical battleground in both this year's midterms and the 2028 presidential election.

"What's happening all across this country, from New York to California and in between ... shows the establishment doesn't get it, the system is broken, it is not working," says Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator and self-described socialist who twice ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination. He argues that wealth and income inequality in America is now so vast that only socialist solutions will work. "Nibbling around the edges is not going to address the enormous crises facing the American people. One man now owns more wealth than the bottom half of American households. That is the political revolution."

Socialists may once have dominated the politics of most countries but they never gained a foothold in America. The best a socialist candidate ever performed in a presidential election was the 6 per cent that Eugene Debs got in 1912. Attempts to shift the Democratic Party in a socialist direction have repeatedly failed. There are various reasons for this uniquely American immunity to the seductions of the world's dominant left-wing ideology: the lack of a strong trade union movement; deeply ingrained Protestant values of entrepreneurial capitalism; the historic absence of a feudal system that begat a class-based political framework in most of Europe after the Industrial Revolution.

But now, for the first time, large numbers of Americans say they like the idea of socialism. A Gallup poll last September found almost four in ten US voters said they had a positive view of socialism. One third of Democratic voters now identify themselves as "democratic socialists", according to a CNN SSRS poll last month.

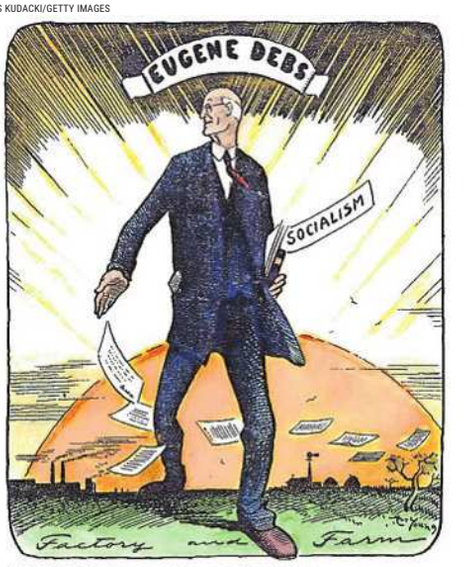
Key democratic socialists Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez Abdul El-Sayed, Bernie Sanders and, below, Zohran Mamdani. Top right, Eugene Debs, the 1912 socialist who got 6% of vote share

The scale of this evolving political transformation can be overstated. As significant as their gains have been this year, the socialists are nowhere near seizing the commanding heights of the Democratic Party. Of the 213 Democratic members of the US House of Representatives not much more than a handful call themselves socialists. In the Senate, Sanders is alone among the 47 Democrats and independents. Even this week's election results were not a sweep for socialists. Sayed won by the narrowest of margins in Michigan. Another socialist-aligned candidate, Cori Bush, was crushed in a Democratic primary in Missouri, and another only narrowly prevailed in an open primary in Washington state.

But there is no doubt the left is in the ascendant. Beyond their immediate number their real power has been to shift the party's moderates in their direction. On issues like universal healthcare, much higher taxes on the wealthy and opposition to Israel, centrist Democrats have been pushed to adopt the left's positions. One leading mainstream Democrat who is running for a Senate seat this year told me he has changed his positions on all these core questions.

Perhaps most importantly, the label "socialist", once the political equivalent of a leprosy diagnosis for a candidate in America, is now acceptable and even

SARAH RICE/GETTY IMAGES; GRANGER/SHUTTERSTOCK; ANDRES KUDACKI/GETTY IMAGES



THE SOWER. Cartoon made for the Socialist Party.

appealing to vast numbers of Democratic voters.

Four big trends have propelled socialism from the history books and museums of bad ideas into the vogue political philosophy for the left in the US. The first might be described as a function of Newtonian political physics: the inevitable equal and opposite reaction to the shift on the right. Donald Trump's success has both appalled and inspired many on the left. It has not only generated a radical response; it has raised the tantalising prospect that radicalism might actually be politically viable.

Party base is angry and impatient

Democratic leaders have trod cautiously in opposing Trump, aware they lost the popular vote two years ago because of what many voters saw as the party's extremism on issues such as race, immigration and gender. But the party's base is furious and impatient. This radicalism is the left's analogue to the Tea Party movement. Just as Republican radicals revolted against their leadership more than a decade ago, so socialists are now upending the Democratic Party's establishment.

A second factor is demographic change. The Democrats' core voters today are more likely to be young, expensively educated professionals. The working-class voters, who never had much truck with socialism, have largely defected to the right, leaving the Democrats controlled by university graduate ideologues, the public sector managerial class and radical bohemians. This shift is reflected in those who have succeeded this year: young professional graduates from relatively privileged backgrounds, often from the new ethnic minorities rising in the party. Sayed is the son of Egyptian immigrants and while at Oxford won a blue playing lacrosse; Mamdani was educated at one of the most expensive colleges in America; Francesca Hong, favoured to win the Democratic primary for governor of Wisconsin next week, studied journalism and Spanish at university and dropped out to become a specialist chef.

It is not surprising that graduates from America's leading universities, where conservatives are harder to find than a working-class white student, are embracing socialism. A recent survey by the libertarian Cato Institute and YouGov found that 62 per cent of Americans aged 18 to 29 have a favourable view of socialism; 34 per cent say the same for communism.

The third reason is the growing inequality of wealth, income and opportunity. America's capitalism has always resulted in sharply divergent fortunes. But the gap between rich and poor, capital and labour, has reached historic levels. Federal Reserve data shows the share of national income that goes to wages and salaries dropped to 54 per cent last month, the lowest level ever recorded. It was 64 per cent as recently as 2001. The dominance of tech companies, their owners and managers, and the spectacle of billionaires and now a trillionaire, has added to the public sense that the economy no longer functions fairly.

This is reinforced by the cosy — crony — relationship between wealthy big business leaders and the political establishment. And the rise of artificial intelligence has showered huge new uncertainty on the future earnings potential of workers. The wider pathologies of the modern digital economy such as loneliness may also be playing a role. As Kathleen Keesey, a student at the University of Colorado, told the Wall Street Journal: "To combat this isolation epidemic, the Democratic Socialists of America positions the American meritocratic system as the antithesis of equality, effectively rallying young voters against a common enemy: those who have successfully climbed the ladder of socioeconomic mobility."

> On issues such as universal healthcare, higher taxes on the wealthy and opposition to Israel, centrist Democrats have been pushed to adopt the left's positions

A fourth factor is the prevalence of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The strife in the Middle East crystallises for many the ideologies of the modern university: colonisation, white supremacy and structural racism. The oppressor-victim narrative that has dominated progressive discourse for years is a paradigm that justifies fierce anti-Zionism, and increasingly antisemitism.

So what are the prospects for the socialist revolution in America? So far the successful socialists have been working at a local level to implement policies with broad popular appeal that challenge the neoliberal economic order. In New York, Mamdani is pushing for a pied-à-terre tax on expensive second homes and has proposed opening city-run grocery stores at which shoppers are supposed to find prices 30 per cent below where they are in the private sector, though with no obvious idea how sustainable that will be. In California, socialist allies have proposed a billionaire tax that would retroactively tax the unrealised gains of the state's wealthiest.

For real socialism to work, they must seize the reins of national power and it's unlikely socialists will have much of a purchase on Capitol Hill even after November. The prospect of one of the insurgents gaining the party's nomination at the 2028 general election seems remote. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the New York congresswoman and tribune of the democratic socialists, barely makes double digits in Democratic primary polls.

Voters will need some convincing

Margaret Thatcher may have said the problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money, but for these would-be revolutionaries the biggest problem remains the American voter. Candidates such as Sayed may win a tight Democratic primary contest but winning a general election is a different matter. While unusually large numbers of Americans say they have a favourable view of democratic socialism, they are way short of a majority. And even those who are sympathetic may not really be thinking of socialism — or at least the kind of socialism most of these candidates advocate.

The term can mean different things to different people: from a somewhat expanded role for the state in the provision of public goods all the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The leading lights of the socialist movement lean distinctly towards the latter. The DSA and its allies want to abolish the police and prisons, eliminate immigration enforcement and defund the military. In an eye-opening interview with Fox News last month, Megan Romer, the national co-chair, happily nodded her assent to each of these extreme positions. Her political vision? Socialism will "get rid of the need for crimes of poverty to exist" so there will be no need for police or prisons or border enforcement.

"Talk to people who voted for them [Democratic Socialists of America] and tell them what's in their platform, and they say, 'Oh, I didn't know that'," says a frustrated establishment Democrat. It's the combination of unhinged extremism and dreamy utopianism that has always done for socialism in the past. There seems no reason to think it won't again.

And yet, a demand for real change is in the air. It may not be "socialism" that America is turning towards. But there is growing anger at the economic divide, the declining opportunities for many; the cost of healthcare, the loss of identity and community in a digitally dominant world. Trump's populism was supposed to answer those concerns with an anti-globalisation, pro-domestic industry programme that would lift American workers. But his tariffs have just raised prices for his people; his foreign wars have not helped them at all; and the evident corruption and cronyism have only reinforced the popular suspicion that the whole system is rigged for the powerful.

There is an opportunity for an enterprising political movement in this climate to channel popular anger with the country and demand real change to a decaying order. It just won't be someone waving a red flag, promising to open all the prisons.

News

JOANN RANDLES FOR THE TIMES

Dry season for coracle fishermen

For as long as west Wales has been recorded in history, it has been known for its coracle fishermen (Ben Cooke writes).

This year, however, the coracle fishermen in tiny round boats on the River Towy in Carmarthenshire have hauled in only six sea trout. They caught a few salmon too but released them because Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the environmental watchdog, said by 2030 they could be extinct locally.

"The river's dying," said Andrew Davies, chairman of the Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association. "Over the last ten or 15 years the fish stocks have disappeared."

Davies, 63, began coracling 38 years ago. "The rivers were teeming with fish," he said. Two dozen coraclers would set out onto the Towy at night in pairs, dragging nets between them. "It's an amazing way to fish. You can actually feel the river under your feet."

Tourists would come with their rods and stay in local hotels. The former US president Jimmy Carter stopped by for a spot of fly fishing in 1986. Now, there are only eight coraclers left. The river is murky brown and, Davies says, "smells like a sewer".

NRW has said the main source of pollution is slurry from dairy farms, which have expanded in recent years. But there are other sources too. Last year Welsh Water's five storm overflow pipes along the river discharged sewage for 1,034 hours.

Davies saw one such discharge in May, on the first morning of the coracle fishing season. "We went 200 yards [up the river], and there was a major pollution leak from Welsh Water. Sewage was pouring in like a waterfall."

Locals have filmed a noxious yellow substance being discharged from a pipe owned by the electronics recycling company Mekatek, which has a discharge licence.

Ofwat has forced Welsh Water to spend £44.7 million on reducing sewage spills and improving water quality. NRW is involved in several enforcement cases and is working to remove barriers to fish migration along the river. Mekatek and NRW were approached for comment. Welsh Water said it was "investing £2.5 billion on environmental projects between now and 2030".

Children learn coracle fishing from the fishermen, far left, who have been on the river for generations. Jimmy Carter fly fishing in 1986

Pollution is not the only factor driving fish away. Overfishing out at sea appears to be playing a role, as are the dry summers that climate change is making more common.

Davies said: "When it's gone it's gone, that's what's heartbreaking."

Athlete pushes for more research on brain cancer

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

Archie Goodburn was born in 2001, the year that a new treatment for glioblastoma, the deadliest and most common type of brain cancer, was approved for use on the NHS. In the 25 years since, no new treatments for it have emerged.

For other cancers, innovation has moved at breakneck speed. Care for those with brain cancer, however, has all but stalled.

This is what caused Goodburn, a record-breaking Scottish swimmer who has oligodendroglioma, to break down in tears on Tuesday as he urged Andy Burnham, the prime minister, in a television interview to appoint a national brain cancer lead.

Progress is slow partly because brain cancers are "rare", although they kill more people under 40 than any other cancer. About 13,000 people are diagnosed each year, and there are about 130 different types, each requiring a different approach and treatment.

Cancer Research UK says that one in four cancer diagnoses involve a "rare" form of the disease and, because they are less common, there is less research and fewer treatment options so the prognosis is often worse.

The Rare Cancers Act, which was passed in March, aims to change this. It will create two dedicated advocates in government, one national clinical lead and one national research lead. But these posts will entail only 36 days of work a year, improving care for 14 cancers. For Goodburn, this is not enough.

"It's a real kind of sting that they actually use [the act] to say, 'by the way, we're doing something'," he told The Times. "It feels hurtful. It's like they're just trying to pawn us off.

"It's an odd feeling, to feel like your government holds such little respect for your life, almost. I'm an athlete that's represented my country for years with pride. When I need the NHS the most, it's really not been there for me."

Archie Goodburn suffers from oligodendroglioma

Goodburn takes vorasidenib, which he got through an early access programme under which Servier, the French pharmaceutical manufacturer, gives it to patients free of charge. But in October, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) rejected it for use on the NHS. Nice eventually approved vorasidenib in April, almost two years after it had been approved in the US.

Burnham has agreed to meet Goodburn, who intends to present him with a long list of recommendations. He wants a "right to try" to let brain cancer patients try promising medications approved for other conditions, as well as whole-genome sequencing, which can better direct treatment for cancer.

The research environment in Britain is not friendly to rare cancer research. "Patients are very keen to be involved in using their bodies as science experiments, but the policies from the MHRA [the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency] are so restrictive," Goodburn said. "The ability to take on clinical trials in the UK is so poor that these companies don't want to run trials in the UK. So the UK patients never see these drugs."

Goodburn feels he "owes his life" to advocacy. Vorasidenib has given him an estimated 15 years to live, which is a long time in terms of brain cancer. "I just don't feel like there's any kind of option not to do anything," he said. "My life depends on advocacy as well ... I owe a huge amount to the whole community for advocating for vorasidenib. I'm living, breathing proof of what can happen if we advocate for ourselves."

Schoolgirls' video prompts minister's misogyny call

Lara Wildenberg, Georgia Lambert

A cabinet minister has said challenging misogyny must be placed "at the forefront of our public consciousness" after five schoolgirls made a video about the rape threats and sexism they face daily.

Bridget Phillipson, the minister for women and equalities, said the footage laid bare the impact of toxic online influences on boys and warned that "the time for talk has long passed".

Daisie, Hallie, Lexi, Ruby and Sadie, who have not shared their surnames, are all 16-year-old students from Tyneside who made a compilation of the abuse they face at school.

The viral video, labelled *Thin End of the Wedge*, highlights the extent of sexist misogyny experienced by girls at a school in the northeast, including a "rape list".

This Life Collective, the charity behind the video featuring the girls, sent it to Andy Burnham and the Department for Education. The department has since expressed interest in the charity's input into developing classroom resources on misogyny.

In the video, the girls conceal their identities behind cardboard placards bearing the misogynistic abuse they have endured. It says: "Here are some things girls have heard in (and out of) schools in the northeast."

The video then references a "shag or swipe list", a "rape list" and even the explicit threat, "I am going to rape you".

The insults include "whore", "ugly bitch", "specky bitch, "spotty cow," "fat c***" and "tramp", as well as comments including "she needs a good slap", "kill yourself", "stop eating" and "lighten up — it's only a bit of banter".

At the end of the video, the girls write: "It's not 'banter'. Men and boys don't start off as rapists — they start as misogynists who aren't challenged."

One of the girls told the BBC she felt worthless after learning of the "rape list" made by her peers. "Boys ordering girls, who they want to rape the most and then the least," she said. "It is frightening because you don't know people's real intentions."

Phillipson, who served as education secretary until last month, told The Times: "Videos like this are yet more evidence of the rotten seeds that social media, and the dark forces who too often exploit it, have sown in the minds of young men and boys."

Peer-on-peer abuse amounted to 52 per cent of all child sexual abuse and exploitation offences in England and Wales in 2024.

The northeast also had the highest rate of violence against women and girls of all regions in England.

The government said it had committed £16 million to pilot targeted interventions in schools. In September every school will deliver the new relationships, sex and health education curriculum, which includes teaching resources on misogyny.

Running app targets ‘cause injuries’

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

About one in five runners who come to Catherine Harris, a running coach in Dublin, are former users of Runna.

The training app and UK start-up, which was bought for millions by fitness platform Strava last year, is a fast-growing tool for people training for their next personal best (PB).

“They come to me and they said I had Runna, and either I got injured or I got completely burnt out,” said Harris.

Her comments reflect a growing view among physios, coaches and runners that it is likely that app-generated training programmes are to blame for an increase in running injuries, because it spurred them to overtrain or run paces that are too fast.

The debate came to a head in February, after Runna influencer and 2:50-marathon runner Mary McCarthy suffered a stress fracture.

Some blamed overtraining and over-reliance on the app, although McCarthy said Runna was not to blame, pointing out she was used to intensive training.

For Harris, 27, the issue is “runfluencers” boasting of their race results due to the app, which leads recreational runners to follow Runna plans too rigidly. “An ordinary runner comes and they think that by following the plan militantly they’re doing the right thing, but actually they’re running themselves into the ground,” said Harris, whose business is called RunCoach-Cath.

The internet is awash with forum and Reddit threads claiming paces set by the app are too hard. Sophie Carter, a coach in Oxfordshire, has seen an influx of clients saying Runna was asking for paces they couldn’t hit. “That is a sure-fire way to get injured,” said the 47-year-old, who coaches as Project Run SC.

BRYAN MEADE AND CHARLIE MCCALDWELL FOR THE TIMES

Christian Orr, who also coaches in Oxfordshire, said apps tend to be weak on post-run feedback and plans adjustments. “If you’re not reaching the right heart rate [for a run] then I’d bring the speed down a little bit. Whereas these apps will just continually push that pace to the point where some people just can’t cope with it,” said Orr, who runs 180Cadence Run Coaching.

Coaches said a big issue was Runna relies primarily on objective data — building a plan off a recent PB — and misses the subjective way most people experience training.

“The fundamental thing about these apps that they don’t account for is illness or if you’ve had a really shit day at work,” said Orr. Carter said that was particularly true for postpartum mothers.

Runna does encourage users to incorporate strength training, but it is easy to make it optional. Research has shown that strength work is crucial for reducing some running injuries. “When I coach people, I tell them that’s the most important session of the week,” Harris said.

But some runners have found Runna’s post-injury recovery plans worked well for them.

Nick Miles, a physio based in Lewes, East Sussex, used a plan on the app to rehabilitate himself. “The rehab plan was good and it reined me in from pushing too far too soon,” said Miles, 51, who said the app countered his “endurance mindset”. He combined suggestions of walk-run sessions with his professional knowledge to come back to running safely.

Catherine Harris, above, Christian Orr and Sophie Carter believe people should be careful when using running apps

Andy Wheeler, a business consultant and runner in Kingston, East Sussex, said his physiotherapist had reported about half of her new clients were following Runna plans.

He has worked with friends to develop an alternative app, which is less prescriptive and focuses on feedback. Rather than asking you for a recent PB as Runna does to build a plan, it pulls in the last two years of a runner’s data from Strava.

The app is grounded in the “80-20” rule of 80 per cent of runs being easy and 20 per cent hard. “That easy piece is crucial for the injury prevention, because it enables you to recover,” the 43-year-old said.

Rather than endlessly pushing the pace, the app monitors heart-rate spikes and other metrics to pull people back. “It will see if you’re overtraining and it will pull you back and say, ‘Right, you went out too hard here and here. You’ve got to slow down’,” he said.

Runna’s app has recently been updated so that it now prompts users for their injury history — rarely or never, minor or past injuries, frequent or recent ones — and adjust plans accordingly.

For a long time it has also allowed runners to adjust their paces mid-plan. Users can up the ante if it is too easy or dial things down if they keep missing target paces.

In a statement, the company said: “Running is a high-impact sport and injury risk can never be eliminated entirely. Injury risk is also influenced by numerous factors including sleep, nutrition, stress, prior injuries and training outside a plan.

“Importantly, runners are encouraged to listen to their bodies, use in-app feedback, and seek professional support early if something doesn’t feel right.

“Runna’s role is to provide structure with flexibility, supporting runners to train safely and sustainably with plans that are designed by real-life, highly experienced coaches using proven training principles.

“The plans support sensible progression and recovery, are personalised to individuals and their goals, and adapt around their progress, feedback and real-world performance.”

Cowell faces court case over ‘napkin agreement’

Simon Cowell is facing legal action over a multimillion-dollar agreement “written on a napkin”, court documents show.

Ian Rosenblatt is bringing the challenge against the celebrity talent spotter at the High Court after working for him as a business adviser.

Katherine Ratcliffe, for Rosenblatt, said in the documents that he was seeking an agreed percentage of a confidential deal made last year.

Alternatively, he is seeking £100,000 in damages for breach of contract.

Cowell is yet to file a defence to the claim.

Rosenblatt, who is a lawyer, began working for Cowell in 2018. He helped with the transfer of shares in Cowell’s company SyCo Entertainment, from Sir Philip Green and Sony to the former *X Factor* judge, leaving Cowell with a 100 per cent stake from July 2020.

Rosenblatt was then appointed a director of SyCo, but in late 2022 he wanted to quit.

Ratcliffe said: “By September 2022 Mr Rosenblatt intended to formally resign as director of Syco because of how challenging he had found working with Mr Cowell.”

She said it was “difficult to communicate” with Cowell, who was “unpredictable” and “extremely emotional”.

A month later, over dinner at Cowell’s London home, the two men made an oral agreement about Rosenblatt taking a percentage of a deal, Ratcliffe said.

> “Cowell was difficult to communicate with and extremely emotional

She added: “The terms of that offer were written on a napkin which Mr Cowell then signed.”

They stated that Rosenblatt would receive 8 per cent of any deal over $30 million , 10 per cent of any deal over $50 million and 15 per cent of any deal over $100 million.

This was later written up and signed by Cowell in February 2023 at his Cotswolds home, Ratcliffe said. Rosenblatt claims, however, that when he sent an invoice to Cowell after the deal last year, the fee was not paid.

A spokesperson for Cowell declined to comment.

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It is easy to stoke division in politics

Miatta Fahnbulleh, the first refugee to sit around a Labour cabinet table, has enjoyed a rapid ascent from the back benches, **Oliver Wright** writes

When Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, first became an MP at the last election two years ago, she was given some advice by an old university contemporary.

"Don't," Rishi Sunak told her, "rise too fast up the political ladder, or you'll end up like me — an older statesman at the age of 44."

It is not, it would be fair to say, advice that Fahnbulleh has taken. Two weeks ago she surpassed even Sunak's rapid ascent from the back benches to the cabinet, making her almost certainly the fastest rising new MP to become a secretary of state since Pitt the Younger in the 1780s.

"No way!" she says when the feat is pointed out. "I'll take that."

Fahnbulleh's rapid rise is not the only unusual thing about her.

The 46-year-old, who was a year ahead of Sunak at Lincoln College, Oxford, is also the first refugee ever to sit around a Labour cabinet table.

She arrived in the country when she was seven from Liberia after her father, who was the country's foreign minister, was forced to flee with his family in 1986 before the outbreak of civil war. It was an upheaval she still remembers clearly and that shapes her political outlook today.

"My father was very vocal in his views and was very critical of the regime that had come in at the time," she says when we meet during a visit to a sheltered housing estate in west London.

"We were on the government's hit list and we had to leave the country very, very quickly.

"The last vivid memory I have of Liberia is being underneath the bed and just hearing gunfire.

"I remember that sense of insecurity. I was quite young and didn't really know what was happening but I remember that. I remembered the hurried way in which we had to leave."

The family initially escaped to Sierra Leone before making a new life in Wembley, north London. But it was Peckham, where she is now an MP, that felt most like "home".

"We lived just off Wembley and you were very conscious that you were a black person coming into a community. I didn't feel I experienced racism, but it was different. Fundamentally different."

"In Peckham there is a big Sierra Leonean community and we had relatives there.

"Every weekend my mum would go and you'd buy your African food from the shops. You'd go and visit the aunties, you'd go to church. So you got that sense of coming to a new place, learning the language, working it out, building new friends, but coming into a sort of a community within a wider community."

After school she secured a place at Oxford where, like Sunak, she studied PPE. The home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, was also a contemporary. She went on to do a doctorate in economic development at the London School of Economics before entering government as a civil servant.

She rose to become head of cities in the policy unit during the coalition government — impressing the future Tory business secretary Greg Clark who described her as a "do-er" who, unlike many other officials, was "willing to take a risk".

For Fahnbulleh the experience was also seminal — giving her an insight that many ministers do not have of what it is like to serve on the other side of the fence.

She said she became well aware of the tendency of officials to take what their minister says literally and, after being appointed to the cabinet, was keen to make clear to her staff that she wanted to be challenged.

"The first time I came into the department as a secretary of state, I said, speak truth to power. Challenge, have ideas.

"There should be nothing that you feel you can't say. It is right for the service to say, 'well, yes, but this is the consequence of that'. Or 'have you thought about this'? Or 'this is why we think it's a terrible idea'. You need to have that in order to effect change, in my view."

Fahnbulleh moved on from the civil service to become director of policy for the left-of-centre think tank the IPPR before becoming chief executive of the New Economics Foundation.

Those roles brought her into direct contact with Sir Keir Starmer's team as they prepared for government as well as the other senior Labour politicians with whom she now sits around the cabinet table.

She was selected for the safe Labour seat of Peckham at the 2024 general election and was only a backbencher for a matter of days before being made a junior minister in the energy department under Ed Miliband.

Miatta Fahnbulleh, who arrived in the

If Starmer expected her to be a loyal government footsoldier, he misjudged Fahnbulleh.

Her junior ministerial position belied her clout as a political operator on the left of the party. And that brought her into conflict with Starmer when she became disillusioned with the direction of the government and the failure to unite the left of British politics to tackle the threat from Reform.

A low point was when she only discovered that Rachel Reeves was planning to scrap winter fuel payments when she heard it announced on the floor of the House of Commons.

"I didn't think it was the right decision and as a person that was tasked with dealing with energy bills and families under huge amounts of pressure," she says now. "I also thought, 'hmm, I'm not sure that it will land well with the country'. And it didn't."

She adds: "Keir is a good guy and he was trying to do his best and I was part of that Labour 1.0 team that were trying against really tough circumstances to deliver the sort of change that we wanted.

"But it was never really clear that we collectively understood what we were trying to do for the country and what the project was that everyone could buy into. This meant that everyone was firing away in their own little corner trying to drive change, but without it leading to the collective. We weren't greater than the sum of our parts."

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but most people are tolerant and kind

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

UK from Liberia aged seven, says she wants civil servants and ministers at the Department of Energy to challenge her

This hit home when Fahnbulleh was campaigning during the London council elections in May. "I spent a lot of time on the doorsteps talking to people and time and time again the message was really clear, which was, 'we are disillusioned and frustrated with you'.

"'You promised change. We don't think you're delivering the scale and pace of change that we want.' What my residents were telling me in quite brutal terms resonated with my gut instinct."

Five days after the results and having only been in parliament for 22 months, Fahnbulleh became the first government minister to resign in support of calls for Starmer to step down. It was not, she insists, easy.

"It was a really hard decision, not least because I have a lot of warmth and respect for the [former] prime minister. I got to work really closely with him on social cohesion. I saw his passion and commitment. So I spoke to my husband, I spoke to my best friend, I spoke to a few colleagues who were also sort of wrestling with that. But in the end, it was a personal decision."

Some allies of Starmer believe that Fahnbulleh, who was close to Miliband, was part of the team that deliberately destabilised the prime minister to force him to make way for Andy Burnham. She has always rejected this but it was certainly true that Fahnbulleh rapidly moved into Burnham's inner circle after the Makerfield by-election, helping to draw up a policy platform for the prime minister in waiting.

She was also handsomely rewarded — taking over from Miliband in a critical cabinet role overseeing the government's net zero agenda.

In that role she has already demonstrated political dexterity. In line with Burnham she sounds far more emollient than Miliband was on future North Sea oil and gas exploration despite previously describing further expansion as "irresponsible and short-sighted".

"We've always been clear that oil and gas are part of the mix," is what she says now. "And it's not just us as government that's saying it, by the way, just what was in the manifesto."

She is also putting much more focus on consumer bills than Miliband — arguing that if the government misses its 2030 clean power pledge by a couple of years that matters less than keeping bills down for consumers and businesses.

"Candidly, my job is to keep people with us," she says. "So 81 per cent of the public believe that renewables are a good thing and support it. I need to keep that number. And the way that I do that is to say to people, we are doing the hard trade-offs to make sure that we are doing this transition in a way that still delivers affordability."

Beyond her current brief there is a broader point to Fahnbulleh's political drive, which you suspect led her to abandon Starmer and which goes to the heart of who she is.

And that is the threat from Reform. As a refugee Nigel Farage's policies of deporting all "illegal" migrants, if they win power, is felt deeply by Fahnbulleh.

Asked about the threat of Reform she says it is still what drives her.

"I have a visceral dislike of divisive politics," she says. "That's not the country I know. It is easy to stoke division, but most people are tolerant and most people are kind and generous. I think it is really sad when politics demeans that."

She later adds: "I feel incredibly lucky because you go from leaving your home to very quickly feeling like you have a home. That's something really special. The gratitude that comes from a country that's taken you in their arms and made this your home. I don't think, unless you've experienced that, you [can] appreciate it, which is why they often say that immigrants are the most patriotic people.

"They're just incredibly grateful for sanctuary and safety."

Miatta Fahnbulleh

Curriculum vitae
Born September 1979 in Liberia, the daughter of the country's former foreign minister Henry Boimah Fahnbulleh.
Education Beechwood Sacred Heart School; Lincoln College, Oxford.
Career Senior UK civil servant, Cabinet Office, 2011-13; director of policy and research at the IPPR, 2016-17; chief executive of the New Economics Foundation, 2017-23.
Political career Elected as MP for Peckham in the 2024 general election; minister for energy consumers, 2024-25; minister for devolution, faith and communities, 2025-26; energy secretary 2026.
Family Married to Graham, with whom she has three children.

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Men fail to show up for dating events

Esme Hewitt Social Media Editor

VICKI COUCHMAN FOR THE TIMES

Fifteen men and fifteen women sit opposite one another, elbow to elbow with other hopeful singles in a bar in Dalston, east London. Every five minutes, the host jingles a silver bell and they rotate. Without the negronis, dim lighting and red candles, it could be a scene lifted from the late 1990s.

A growing number of young singles are turning to — and creating — in-person dating events in search of something apps no longer provide: a meaningful connection.

Tickets almost always sell but there's a problem: the men are too scared to turn up.

"I've had to recruit guys from Hinge for the events," admits Sophia Kav, 29, the founder of Almost Lovers. The women's tickets for her "sexy speed dating" sell out in minutes, whereas men require a compelling sales pitch to convince them to sign up.

Ten minutes before her most recent event, The Times joined her as she rushed around Broadway Market in central London, trying to recruit single men to replace the five who had dropped out at the last minute.

Similarly, Olivia Gair, the 28-year-old founder of singles dating event What Happens Next, admitted she has handed out free tickets to men to ensure an even gender split.

"Men are more shy than we think," she says. "I forget that my friends and I are really confident and willing to put ourselves out there, but because of this whole 'I hate men' talk on social media, guys have had a confidence knock and don't know how to behave in modern dating. I feel bad for them."

Tom Westall, 24, who attended the Almost Lovers event to support his friend, said: "Events like this are great for bringing people together but I don't really look to meet people in situations that feel this forced — it's not really my vibe."

Oliver, 28, was scouted on Instagram two days before the event. "I wouldn't usually put myself in this sort of setting as I'm quite an introverted person," he said. "Speed dating is intense and feels like an attack of the senses."

Tobi, 28, thinks men prefer to hide behind the screen of dating apps. "We forget that it takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there and be judged, and as a man you have to put on a brave face, but we're actually sensitive," he said. "The way we've been brought up teaches us we can't be."

The dating event What Happens Next, which met recently in a London pub, was founded by Olivia Gair, left. She has had to distribute free tickets to men to ensure an even gender split

Callum Lewis, 28, has attended three dating events this summer and has been called "brave" by his colleagues. "We're taught to be more nonchalant and not really share how we're feeling but at the same time be confident and say the right thing," he said. "Because it's so difficult striking this balance, a lot of men default to not trying at all."

Olivia Petter, 32, the founder of Red Lips Dating, spotted this trend early. She has sold out all 15 of her events, collaborating with the likes of Bumble, Charlotte Tilbury and Soho House.

To maintain an even gender split, women are required to bring a male friend. Petter says the rule serves two purposes: ensuring attendees are "vetted" and addressing why some men hesitate to make the first move. "Men are scared of approaching us in real life, they're cautious to not cross a boundary. These events eliminate that barrier."

"Women are more proactive in their dating," she says, adding that with these events, "it becomes about women helping other women because the attendance hinges on bringing a man."

Petter's insistence that women bring a male friend speaks to a broader reality of modern dating. As apps lose their appeal, the challenge is no longer simply where to meet someone, but whether people have the confidence and vulnerability to put themselves forward in the first place.

HSE apologises for inspector's tirade

Amelia Stout

A health and safety inspector bragged that he could shut down an oil company "in a matter of minutes" during an expletive-ridden tirade in which he told directors they were "f***ing screwed", according to a complaint submitted to his bosses.

Simon Hough, an inspector at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), threatened to charge BritNRG £30,000 on account of being "pissed off" and warned one director at the Essex-based company that his pension pot was "going down the f***ing pan" during a 74-minute call last summer.

In a complaint lodged with HSE, Pierpaolo Rocco, the company's chief executive, described Hough as a "bully", and alleged that his behaviour had resulted in a member of staff taking medical leave for stress.

The company, which was given an "A" score for regulatory compliance by the Environment Agency last year, said that while it welcomed strong regulation, Hough had failed to back up any of his threats with written notices that could be challenged in court.

After an internal review, HSE apologised for Hough's behaviour, arguing that he had been "trying to be too helpful", but said there was "no evidence of harassment". Hough is still working for the regulator, his LinkedIn page shows.

In 2021, BritNRG took over an oil and gasfield in Whisby, Lincolnshire, working with the HSE to rectify inherited issues. It alleges that Hough, the official assigned to the case, engaged in a pattern of verbal abuse, regulatory overreach and interference in decisions during a series of meetings in which he described one contractor as a "wild dog".

The dispute intensified last summer after Hough took issue with changes to a company report, which he said had been made by "non-competent personnel". During a call later, Hough told directors they were "f***ing screwed", according to recordings given to The Telegraph. He also told Rocco that he was "dicking around" and that if he didn't "speak properly" then "we are just going to shut you down", adding: "I can do that in a matter of minutes."

The inspector threatened to charge the company a "lot of money" for wasted time on the matter, "because we are basically pissed off", suggesting the bill could amount to £30,000.

BritNRG has been pursuing its complaint against Hough for more than a year, and has taken it to "tier three", the highest in the HSE. The regulator intends to reply within 20 working days.

A spokesperson for the HSE said: "We have already apologised for unacceptable behaviour. Given the serious nature of the latest complaint, we have launched a thorough ... review."

Farm too expensive for me to retire, says actor Clunes

Martin Clunes has revealed that he cannot afford to retire from acting because his farm is so expensive to run.

The Men Behaving Badly star said that there is too high a cost of keeping horses, cattle and a lot of dogs on the farm and they used to keep sheep but they were too "annoying".

The 64-year-old, who lives at Higher Meerhay Farm near Beaminster in West Dorset, said he has to keep acting to pay for all of his animals but he admitted that he loves to work.

Talking on the *Rosebud* podcast, Clunes said: "I live in West Dorset on a small farm with horses and cattle. We did have sheep, but they're annoying, and lots of dogs. [The sheep] just want to die for a pastime, really.

"I mean lambing is the best bit of sheep farming. Anyone will tell you that. That's nice. Although it's the hardest work, but it's nice. They're gorgeous when they're bouncing and bambling around. But then they're just. They're just charmless sheep."

When asked if work or the animals came first, he said: "Well, it's all part of the melee of my life, really. I mean, the work, I have to work to support, you know, we're quite expensive to run.

"And not that I want to retire, but I couldn't anyway."

Talking about his dogs, Clunes said: "And then, because of the way we roll with our dogs, we just go, we don't use leads, we just walk around the farm, you know, for their exercise.

"And pretty soon they were off. They were off and away. We put GPS trackers on them. But there was no help. You could just see how far away they were."

World

On patrol with Taliban's 'Virtue and Vice' police

Strict Islamic dress and behaviour is enforced by Afghanistan's morality officers, writes **Anthony Loyd** in Kabul

MARCUS YAM/GETTY IMAGES

Taliban morality police patrol Bamyan, enforcing rules on women's dress, below, and on matters ranging from dog fighting to befriending non-Muslims

The Taliban's Virtue and Vice squad have had a busy day on Kabul's sin-filled streets. Transgressors abound. Men's beards are not the required length. Women still dare to expose their faces. Cars have been playing music. Prayer times have not been properly observed. Gender segregation in restaurants remains ill-disciplined, and one patrol has found an underground shop selling banned hookah pipes.

Deviants have required careful persuasion, in accord with the Taliban's Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. For most of the wrongdoers, this has merely involved a talking-to by the law's enforcers — the *muhtasibin,* known better as the morality police. But for one couple, caught together in a car at a Virtue and Vice checkpoint in the Shahr-e Naw district, the stakes are higher.

Under questioning, the 20-year-old woman admits that she is not the wife of the driver, a 31-year-old man. Worse, he is married to someone else. They are taken in for interrogation at the Virtue and Vice HQ in the city's 10th district, and matters deteriorate further when video clips on the man's phone show the woman "improperly covered".

"This is not a case of adultery," Esmanullah Hanafi, head of the Virtue and Vice enforcers in the 10th district, says. "There is neither evidence, nor confession of adultery. Nevertheless it is a clear case of moral corruption, and one requiring discretionary punishment."

Hanafi, 35, a former bomb maker, sends the case to a Taliban court. Depending on the judge, the couple in the car may each receive between one and three months in jail — or else be married in the courtroom.

"The judge will decide," Hanafi says. "If we go easy on them, everyone will be doing it!" He gathers four colleagues and steps back onto the streets to do battle with rights and wrongs.

The Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice is the most infamous piece of legislation passed by the Taliban since they returned to power in Afghanistan five years ago. It codifies in law myriad forms of public and private behaviour, bestows sweeping powers on the 5,000-strong morality police force and strips away fundamental freedoms for Afghans.

Approved by the Taliban supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Virtue and Vice law was promulgated in 2024. As with other Taliban decrees, neither the Afghan people nor regional leaders were consulted.

The law details numerous acts that are either forbidden or obligatory, in keeping with the Taliban's determination to impose a pure Islamic system. It covers everything from women's dress codes to the media, taking in adultery, lesbianism, music, organ implants, gambling and dog fighting, beard-shaving, sodomy and befriending non-Muslims.

Restrictions on women's dress and their right to speak or even appear in public have attracted the greatest criticism. The UN has described them as "effectively attempting to render [women] into faceless, voiceless shadows".

The Taliban, who believe their victory was ordained by God, dismiss such claims.

"I am not in any way concerned by the accusations of disadvantaging women or repressing women's rights," Saif-ul Islam Khaybar, the spokesman for the Virtue and Vice ministry, told The Times. "We value women's dignity more than anywhere else. We are for women's rights — the rights given to women by sharia, the law of our religion. You should not compare the laws of other countries to ours.

"Your society has given men opportunity in nightclubs, bars and discos where men can consort freely with women and where women can be raped. Of course men will rape them in those circumstances. It is the same as if you put fresh meat somewhere and tell a cat not to eat it: the cat will eat it."

The law has further damaged the job prospects and the health of Afghan women, who have already been affected by Taliban edicts limiting girls' education and the training of female health practitioners.

Article 20 forbids drivers from transporting a woman unless she is accompanied by a *mahram*, a husband or close male relative. As a result, many women — healthcare workers, patients and employees in the few remaining sectors in which women can work — have found it difficult to commute to offices and medical facilities.

Combined with the other restrictions, the direct and indirect effects of the law are estimated by the World Bank to cost Afghanistan more than $1.4 billion a year, or 7 per cent of its gross domestic product, at a time when more than 17 million of the country's 45 million people are suffering from acute hunger.

Back on Kabul's streets as dusk settles across the capital, Hanafi and his Virtue and Vice squad begin a new search for moral transgression.

He recalls the time he blew up an American armoured vehicle with a 22kg bomb in Laghman province in the east of the country. "It was totally destroyed!" he smiles, describing it as the most efficient of his bombings.

Selected for their qualifications in Islamic studies and their knowledge of sharia law, the officers, dressed in distinctive white coats, move through the bright lights of the affluent Shahr-e Naw district.

"We don't usually carry weapons these days, as it leads to fear," Hanafi says. "We need to be calm so that people will trust us."

In the late 1990s, during the Taliban's first period of rule in Afghanistan, morality police regularly whipped men off the streets and into mosques at prayer time, tied thieves to lamp posts and beat them, and assaulted women.

Their present approach — for now at least — appears different. Hanafi's team tell several women to cover their faces, but do so quietly. There are reports of officers slapping the chaperones of women with uncovered faces but no such confrontations were witnessed by The Times last week.

As Hanafi checks that segregation protocols are being observed and face coverings adhered to in shops and restaurants, he explains the "escalated persuasion" techniques available to his men.

These begin at "recommendation", move to "threatening with harsh words" or the destruction of property such as musical instruments, and end in imprisonment for one to three days.

More serious offences are referred up to Taliban courts. "In no case can I beat the transgressor," Hanafi says.

From outside Afghanistan, the Taliban's rule is often seen as monolithic and total. It is not. Edicts from the supreme leader, who has yet to appear in public after five years in charge, are translated by provincial governors and morality police units in different ways. Though singular in vision, the Virtue and Vice law is decentralised in its application across the patchwork of Afghanistan's ethnic, sectarian and cultural differences.

In the traditionalist Pashtun south of the country, for example, disobedience of the law is rare; few women are visible on the streets at all, and those who are out walking are chaperoned.

Kabul is Sin City by comparison. Adherence to the law is patchy and transgression is common.

Khaybar, the Virtue and Vice ministry spokesman, says: "Kabul is a capital city with a huge population, exposed to all different types of ideologies and rules — Soviet and American — where people have been encouraged to dress as westerners, and where previously you were even allowed to look at women if you wished, until it was considered evil.

"There are differences in the size and place and culture of the population across Afghanistan, so the rules are implemented slightly differently from place to place, but only because it takes time to enforce the law."

He pauses and speaks again. There is no ambiguity in his words. "It is a step-by-step process. Ultimately, the law will be implemented across the land in full, and there will be no differences in how it will eventually be applied."

Tourist glut takes lustre off Pearl of Lake Como

The crush begins even before the multi-coloured matchbox houses come into view. A human tide spills out of the train station, then down a hill onto a narrow metal walkway draped with flowers and offering views of majestic hills rising from the lake (James Imam writes).

It is the height of the tourist season and visitors have descended on Varenna, Lake Como's latest must-visit destination. Often called the "Pearl of Lake Como", the village is packed with tourists stopping on the metal walkway for the perfect holiday selfie.

"It's absolutely gorgeous," says Amy Reehal, 38, a property lawyer from Orpington.

Varenna has recently morphed into one of Italy's biggest tourist hotspots, now flooded by 17,500

Sun, sea and communists in Xi's getaway resort
Page 42

Russian bombs force Kyiv underground again
Page 44

ALXPIN/GETTY IMAGES; LAURA LARMO FOR THE TIMES

Varenna now attracts thousands of tourists daily, many of whom reach it by a narrow walkway along the lake. Karen from Detroit, left, visited with her sisters, nieces and friends

visitors a day in the high season.

Once the preserve of wealthy Milanese second-home owners and a small number of middle-class British holidaymakers, Varenna is now inundated with day-trippers.

The crowds sometimes bring havoc, impropriety and interminable queues. In an attempt to keep them in check, Mauro Manzoni, the mayor, last month imposed fines of up to €200 on anyone in the streets in swimwear.

Varenna's rapid rise encapsulates the dilemma facing many beauty spots across Europe: reaping the rewards of mass tourism, while watching the social fabric that is part of their charm unravel.

"I call it a tourist village," says Manzoni. "There is this constant turnover of people, but there is no longer a community."

Many come to the village, which sits on the eastern shore where Lake Como splits into two branches, to visit the aristocratic Villa Monastero and capture selfies at the "Gate of Paradise" — a wrought-iron gate at the bottom of terraced gardens framing views of the lake.

Karen, a 34-year-old nurse from Detroit who did not provide her surname, is full of enthusiasm during her family holiday.

"Varenna's beautiful," she says before disappearing into a gelateria with her sisters, nieces and friends.

Locals are increasingly being tempted to leave the village and rent out their apartments.

"I now see an invasion of tourists," says Mauro Missaglia, 67, a retired nuclear engineer originally from Monza who now lives in Versailles, near Paris. He has been visiting Varenna since childhood. "My wife calls it the influencer effect."

Few can agree on what first propelled Varenna to international fame. Almost everyone agrees that the turning point was the end of the Covid pandemic. Selfie-stick wielding tourists have proved effective marketers, sometimes inventing their own myths.

'Madrid ignores us, we're crushed by migrant crisis'

Ceuta's residents look to their Madonna for help as they accuse Spain of abandoning them, **David Sharrock** writes

An effigy of the Virgin of Africa is paraded through the streets accompanied by local women in Flamenco-style dresses. The residents of Ceuta, shaken by a border crisis, have once again turned to the city's patroness for help.

A brass band plays and onlookers cry "Viva la Virgen de Africa! Guapa!" At the climax of the ceremony, the effigy is turned to face the Strait of Gibraltar. In 1651, a plague swept both sides of the strait, which abated after she was paraded around the city walls. This time the crisis did not arrive from the north.

The procession was initially cancelled due to the emergency created by a surge of more than 70,000 mostly young Moroccan men illegally crossing into the territory over a week ago. Hundreds attended the Christian parade. It was a show of civic pride and solidarity in a city where a slim majority is believed to be Muslim but where *convivencia* — coexistence — reigns.

Meanwhile, attitudes towards Morocco, and the government in Madrid, are hardening.

"It's an injustice for all of us in Ceuta, and for the poor people who were suckered into crossing the border, more than a hundred dead in the sea and thousands more wandering our streets," said Paqui, a baker in the city's central market. "We've been abandoned by Madrid for as long as I can remember. They were warned this was going to happen and they did nothing."

Francisco Galan, the market's president said: "Ceuta is crushed by what happened." He added: "Both Madrid and Rabat are to blame. But for me the passivity of my government is worse, because warnings were made from us before the deluge."

The sense of abandonment has been heightened by the visit of Ceuta's veteran president, Juan Jesús Vivas, to King Felipe in Mallorca. It is normal for the king to visit crisis-hit corners of his dominion. Last week, he and Queen Letizia interrupted their holiday to meet evacuees from wildfires near Madrid. Yet the last visit made by a Spanish monarch to his north African possessions was by King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia in 2007. Rabat, which does not recognise Spanish sovereignty over Ceuta and Melilla, called the visit "totally unacceptable".

After an hour with the king in Marivent, his summer palace, Vivas announced that he was certain Felipe will visit Ceuta. "What I cannot tell you is when, but I am convinced that he will honour the commitment he has personally made and will go to Ceuta."

José María Campos, a lawyer and former chairman of Ceuta´s business confederation, showed The Times a thick folder of photographs celebrating the visit by Felipe's father, when he was surrounded by joyous subjects.

"I believe the king is keen to come to Ceuta, especially when we're having such a hard time," he said. "But he needs the government's permission to visit, and apparently that authorisation hasn't been granted. Perhaps the government, for some reason, fears a negative reaction from Morocco."

Sergio Ramirez Muñoz, president of the city's shopping district, owns a busy menswear store in a prime central location. "Economically, the impact on business owners is brutal. We are facing an immediate crisis. We lost our patron saint festivities, which are the year's peak for tourism," he said. "We are worried about new mass arrivals, which we are seeing discussed on social media."

Ceuta's relations with Morocco have soured. Some argue that hybrid attacks using migration, and economic tactics, are being used by Rabat to bring about its ultimate aim of taking the city.

Morocco stopped cross-border shoppers travelling to Ceuta in 2018, ending a trading relationship upon which tens of thousands of the city's citizens depended for a daily living. The warehouses of the Tarajal border post in which hundreds of migrants are now camping used to be full of goods destined for Morocco.

Paqui is adamant that a city under the protection of the Virgin of Africa will resist and never fall, calling herself a proud "*caballa*" — the nickname for locals born and bred in the shade of the southern Pillar of Hercules.

"We are a Spanish city and that will never change," she said.

King Felipe, left, met Juan Jesús Vivas, the president of Ceuta, in his royal residence in Mallorca to discuss the ongoing crisis

CHALINEE THIRASUPA/REUTERS; LILLIAN SUWANRUMPHA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; VIRAL PRESS

‘Troubled’ teenager shoots seven dead

At least seven people were killed when a “troubled” teenage student shot dead members of his family then opened fire at his prestigious school on the outskirts of Bangkok (Tash Mosheim writes).

The shooting happened yesterday morning at Debsirin Nonthaburi School, a secondary school of about 3,000 pupils. Five staff, including teachers, were among the dead. Another 30 people were injured and several were thought to be in a critical condition. One was a girl, 12, who had a bullet wound to the head. Fifteen students were injured as they tried to flee.

Officers revealed that the gunman had killed his grandparents at their home before heading to the school. Police said the killer was 14 and turned the gun on himself. They have not released his identity. It is believed that he used his grandfather’s gun.

The prime minister has pledged to introduce new gun control laws to restrict the carrying of firearms by the public. Anutin Charnvirakul said: “The new law will allow only government officials on duty to carry guns.”

There are an estimated ten million firearms in Thailand, making it southeast Asia’s largest gun-owning nation. Previous restrictions have not prevented shootings.

Dozens of police and emergency workers were outside the school yesterday as parents raced to pick up their children and tearful students and staff comforted each other.

Purin Khumchoo, 17, who had nearly been shot, said he knew the gunman. “He was my junior, but I had a feeling that he was a troubled kid,” he told Agence France-Presse outside his school. “My friends who knew him said he was interested in the FBI and guns, and that he was bullied.

“When I saw him aiming the gun at me, I thought he looked very professional, as if he had trained for a long time.”

Photos in the local media show the suspect wearing a purple school uniform and carrying a cross-body bag. Several bullet casings were also visible on the ground.

An unnamed student said that “there were many shots: bang, bang, bang. Then it went quiet. Then it started again”.

Charnvirakul told reporters that the teenage suspect was “under stress” related to his schooling.

A student weeps outside Debsirin Nonthaburi School after a 14-year-old, above left, went on the rampage. Top right, the wife of a teacher who died

Sun, sea and secretive communists

China

Richard Spencer China Correspondent

No one knows whether the Communist Party really does like to be beside the seaside. But it still goes, every year, for a holiday at the colonial era resort of Beidaihe, on China’s northeast coast.

Chairman Mao used the enforced attendance of his politburo to lecture them for hours about how they should all be doing manual labour to make them better people.

Deng Xiaoping splashed around in the sea for the cameras a month after the Tiananmen Square massacre to show he was unconcerned by the world’s condemnation.

President Xi is more discreet, as in all aspects of his governance. The cameras, and ordinary citizens, are kept well away from the leadership’s secluded villas by armies of plain-clothed “holidaymakers” with ear-pieces.

But if the few released pictures are to be believed, even today the leadership’s summer break is instructional.

As the party apparatus arrived this week, Xi’s closest aide, fixer and the politburo’s No 5 man, Cai Qi, greeted dozens of scientists and professors, whose presence is presumably to entertain their hosts with talks on their specialist subjects.

“Cai called on the experts to carry forward the spirit of scientists, strive for new achievements in their respective fields, and make greater contributions to securing decisive progress in basically realising socialist modernisation,” according to Xinhua, the state agency.

There was no mention of sandcastles. The scientists were dressed nearly identically in white shirts and dark grey trousers. It is that sort of holiday.

It was Mao who began the Party leadership’s annual tradition of heading to Beidaihe, near where the Great Wall meets the Yellow Sea, every summer.

There was no great Chinese tradition of seaside holidays, as in Britain, and it was not a natural thing to do. The resort’s villas were themselves built in late imperial times for Europeans trying to escape Beijing’s sweltering summers.

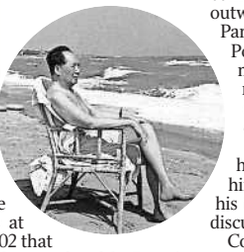
The people of China, historically, were not enthusiastic swimmers. But Mao prided himself on his love of water, showing off his strokes as a symbol of his virility and, in later years, his health, once humiliating the Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev, whom he despised and who could not swim, by making him go in the water in a pink float.

But Beidaihe’s summer gatherings also had a political purpose, right up to the present day. It is that which may have changed under Xi.

More than under any previous leader, including Mao, Xi does not allow personal politics, so the Beidaihe holiday’s role as a forum for political horse-trading and backroom deals has come to a stop. No reliable gossip has emerged from Beidaihe for years.

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

Visitors pose with a stone inscribed with the character for Beidaihe, the resort in China popularised by Chairman Mao, below, in the 1950s. President Xi and his inner circle visit the town each summer



There have been big moments in Beidaihe’s history. In 1958, Mao subjected his weary colleagues, veterans of persecution, the Long March, the civil war and years of purges and ideological struggle, to five lengthy, rambling speeches in two weeks.

At their heart was a call for a rejuvenation of the national mood — Mao was 67 at the time — and a recommitment to communism. The result was the building of massive communes all over the country, into which agricultural and industrial production was concentrated, leading to economic collapse and a famine that killed tens of millions.

This century, the meetings have had more positive effects. It was at Beidaihe in 2002 that final details of the transfer of the Party’s leadership from Jiang Zemin to his successor, Hu Jintao, often described as the first voluntary handover of power in Chinese history, are said to have been thrashed out.

But Xi has abandoned the principle of transfer of power, awarding himself unlimited terms. Promotions appear to be entirely in his own hands. There will be no talk of succession in Beidaihe, but the holiday continues even if, in the opaque world of Xi’s neo-imperial court, no one knows what happens there.

“In the 90s and early 2000s there were all sorts of leaks,” said Kerry Brown, professor of Chinese studies at King’s College London and author of a recent biography of Mao. “Those days are long gone. It’s an interesting question as to why they still do it.”

What is clear is that Xi is far more committed than his predecessors to the outward form of the Communist Party’s institutional procedures. Policy and personnel announcements follow rigorously on from monthly meetings of the politburo, or the annual “plenums” of the central committee.

The broad thrust of changes may have already been decided by Xi himself, in consultation with Cai and his inner circle. But no hint of those discussions is ever allowed to emerge.

Continuing with the Beidaihe vacation may just be another indication of Xi’s sense of communist history, and his own starring role in it.

“Is it just a cultural commitment to the traditions of the communist movement?” Brown said. “Or is it for Xi to get his friends close and his enemies closer and shake them up a bit?”

Or, maybe, it is just a holiday, albeit with communist characteristics. Xi did once say, in a rare interview, that swimming was his favourite athletic pastime.

‘Grotesque’ glass pavilion triggers new Paris uprising

More than 75,000 people have signed a petition against plans for the facelift of the Assembly, **David Chazan** writes

The gilded salons, painted ceilings and mirrored galleries of the Palais Bourbon were originally intended not for parliamentary debate but for pleasure and courtly intrigue.

Louise-Françoise de Bourbon — the flamboyant daughter of Louis XIV and his mistress Madame de Montespan — had the palace built on the Left Bank between 1722 and 1728 with ornate gardens sweeping down to the Seine.

Then came the Revolution. In 1791 the palace was confiscated and declared the “property of the people”.

Almost overnight, it was transformed. Where powdered nobles had once traded gossip in its corridors, the revolutionary authorities carved out a semi-circular debating chamber, the *hémicycle*, and installed the Council of Five Hundred. It eventually became the home of today’s National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament.

The Palais Bourbon is now at the centre of a political row over a plan, backed by President Macron’s centrists and many left-wingers, to build a modern glass-fronted pavilion next to its neoclassical façade.

Napoleon had the façade remodelled in the early 19th century, with a grand colonnade in the style of an ancient Greek temple. Today that Corinthian portico, facing the Place de la Concorde and the Madeleine church on the Right Bank, is one of Paris’s most recognisable landmarks.

Conservatives and heritage campaigners say the “hideous and grotesque” €53 million glass pavilion will disfigure a historic monument. Even some left-wingers oppose it on the grounds of cost.

The new building would house an entrance lobby, cafeteria, cloakrooms and the Assembly’s bookshop, with two underground levels for immersive exhibitions.

On the Seine side, a new section of façade made up of four glass cylinders is supposed to embody the four constitutional values of the French republic: indivisible, secular, democratic and social.

The row echoes the hostility to the glass pyramid built at the Louvre in the 1980s — another contemporary addition to a centuries-old architectural jewel that has since been embraced by many Parisians as a landmark in its own right.

The National Assembly project is championed by the Socialist-led Paris council and Yaël Braun-Pivet, the centrist speaker of the house, who is an ally of Macron. However, more than 75,000 people have signed a petition against it.

Rachida Dati, the right-wing mayor of Paris’s wealthy 7th arrondissement and a former culture minister, said: “The existing dressed-stone entrance pavilion dating from 1888 will be demolished and replaced with 4,000 sq m of glass and concrete. We must mobilise to prevent this destruction of our heritage.”

On the other side of the political divide, Ségolène Royal, a former Socialist presidential candidate and ex-partner of François Hollande, the former president, has condemned “this scandalous plan to splurge public money” at a time of severe budget cuts.

Sébastien Chenu, an MP for Marine Le Pen’s National Rally, has demanded the project be shelved, arguing that the Assembly must be “exemplary when it comes to public spending”.

Not so, countered Christine Pirès-Beaune, a Socialist MP. “There is no advantage in postponing this project because it not being financed by state funds but from the Assembly’s own reserve funds,” she claimed.

Regardless of its financing, conservation groups say it fails on aesthetic and historic grounds.

“They’re going to stick a grotesque block of glass onto the Palais Bourbon, a Unesco world heritage site,” said Grégory Chaumet, head of the Paris Historique association.

“It will irretrievably disfigure one of Paris’s most beautiful urban vistas. They are flouting conservation regulations for a horrendous, hideous and grotesque project that no one wants.”

Planning permission for the project was suspended in February, but the Paris Council voted last month to ease building rules for the site, which has allowed the plans to proceed.

The Assembly now hopes to have the pavilion completed in 2028.

A temporary installation by the street artist Seth on the Assembly’s façade has also drawn derision from politicians.

It depicts Marianne, the female personification of the French republic, as a child who appears “half-naked and drowning”, complained Royal, who intends to run for the presidency again next year.

“How much did this useless operation cost?” she asked.

A glass-fronted pavilion will sit alongside the façade of Palais Bourbon, which houses the National Assembly. The plan has been defended by its president, Yaël Braun-Pivet, below. The Louvre’s pyramid, below left, also drew ire initially

Pauline Loeb, left, in the Louvre, and Camille Jouneaux, below, make art accessible to their hundreds of thousands of social media followers

Influencers give art a fresh renaissance

When the impressionist Edgar Degas surmised that art is what you make others see, he could not have imagined that more than a century later his work would be shared online by Instagram influencers (Colette Fountain writes).

In an attempt to modernise and attract younger audiences, art galleries housing Degas’ work are increasingly employing content creators to share videos about their collections.

“Before Covid, museums were afraid to put collections online because they thought people wouldn’t go to museums anymore,” Camille Jouneaux, a freelancer who works with the Louvre, Musée d’Orsay and Opéra National de Paris, said.

However, the pandemic made institutions realise it was also possible to cultivate an audience online, and “it was great to target lots of different audiences”, she added.

Jouneaux, 40, does not have a background in art, but “really fell in love” after several years living in Paris and London. She taught herself art history and got a job as a social media manager for Google Arts and Culture, a platform that collaborates with cultural institutions to show artefacts online. In 2019, she went freelance after documenting a trip to Rome’s museums on Instagram. She has about 185,000 followers on the platform.

In one of her posts, the *Mona Lisa* seems to peer from the side of the screen, eyeing up vibrant yellow text which invites Jouneaux’s followers to celebrate Leonardo da Vinci’s 574th birthday.

Scrolling through the post, from April, reveals more of his artwork, interspersed with emojis and text sharing facts about his life.

François Mairesse, a professor at Sorbonne Nouvelle and Unesco chair for museum diversity and its evolution, said a reduction in public funding had put museums under increased pressure to commercialise.

After the Louvre was granted financial autonomy in 1993, its directors introduced departments for funding and communication, which often meant hiring more young people, with roles dedicated to social media. Jouneaux said it was “not just about more visitors, it’s about getting younger ones”. The state has asked institutions such as the Louvre to “be more open to the younger public”, Mairesse said.

In-house teams might prioritise traditional social media such as Facebook, while influencers with an art-focused audience can help them branch out on newer platforms including, Instagram and TikTok. It is a marketing tactic that seems to be working. In 2023, France’s museums recorded an 11 per cent rise in young visitors compared with 2022, with an overall growth of 14 per cent.

“Knowledge about art is initially something that was for the elite or very well-educated. For me, it’s a matter of democracy … art belongs to everyone,” Jouneaux said.

This was echoed by Pauline Loeb, 39, who worked at the Galerie Kugel and now posts to her 250,000 followers. “Many people, whatever the generation, feel museums or contemporary art aren’t for them,” she said. “Social media removes that psychological barrier. Once people realise they don’t need a degree in art history to enjoy an exhibition, they’re more likely to walk through the doors.”

While classical visitors might have been shocked to see influencers in the art world, Mairesse said “it would not frighten anybody anymore”.

World

Bombs force Kyiv underground again

The metro has not been this busy since the war began. **Catherine Philp** reports on life in the makeshift bunkers

OLEKSII FILIPPOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; VIACHESLAV RATYNSKYI FOR THE TIMES

Metro stations across Kyiv were packed out on the night of July 29 when the Ukrainian air force warned of a massive ballistic missile attack. At Dorohozhychi station, which is more modern than some of the Soviet-era metro, a couple soothes their pet cat and children take their mind off the attacks by doing some drawing

Every evening, as the trains of Kyiv's metro still thunder and screech on their rails, a tent city begins to form far below the surface. Mats are unfurled, sleeping bags laid out and tents erected as a community of strangers bed down in the capital's deep underground, preparing for another night under fire.

It is more than four years since the citizens of the city first moved there en masse to escape Russian bombardment, taking refuge in their Soviet-era metro. It became a symbol of Kyiv's resilience, even serving as the backdrop to a performance by the rock band U2.

Now residents of the capital are once again going underground, driven by an escalating campaign of ballistic missile attacks that Ukraine no longer has the defences to deter.

"I started coming here every few nights after the missiles hit Lukianivska for the third time this year," said Yulia, a resident of Kyiv's most intensively bombed neighbourhood. "And then yesterday when I heard the news that we had run out of missiles to intercept the ballistics I decided I had no choice but to come every night."

Yulia, 47, took the metro from her local station, Lukianivska, one stop to Dorohozhychi, carrying a pop-up camouflage tent and a pet carrier containing her elderly tabby cat, Maya.

Dorohozhychi is not Kyiv's deepest station but it is one of the more modern, providing a little more comfort and facilities. Nobody, however, comes to sleep here out of choice.

"It is the search for safety that forces us down here," said Olena, 31, who has come to the station every night with her partner, Anton, 32, since their apartment windows were blown out by a Russian missile that struck a nearby school three weeks ago.

"The missiles hit faster than we can make it to the shelter," Olena said. "So we have no choice."

The station has not looked like this since early in 2022, after Russia launched its full-scale invasion. Tents, camp beds and yoga mats vie for floor space in the concourse between the platforms; in the ticket hall, parents rock buggies with sleeping infants as pet owners settle their dogs or pour a cat from its carrier into a pop-up tent.

Between 11pm, when trains stop running, and midnight, when the curfew begins, is the busiest. Many wait for warnings of an attack before deciding whether to spend the night underground. It is a fine balance. Sleep at home and risk your life or come to the metro and spend the night safely but in discomfort, rising at 5.30am when the trains start before making it into work.

Metro stations across Kyiv were packed out on the night of July 29 when Ukraine's air force warned of intelligence pointing to a ballistic attack. More than 56,000 people took shelter in the metro system according to officials. Others booked hotels with shelters or slept in basement carparks.

On that night, a security guard was killed in Kyiv when a missile hit a warehouse. Two nights later, when there was no advance warning before the air alert, nine people were killed. Among them was Olena Rozhniativska, and her 18-year-old daughter, Kateryna, who were killed as they tried to reach a shelter.

The next day, President Zelensky said Ukraine had exhausted its supply of interceptors for the American-made Patriot system, the only one it has capable of shooting down ballistic missiles. "Only one ballistic missile was intercepted because there are no interceptors for the Patriot systems," he wrote.

On Tuesday night into Wednesday morning, 17 were killed in and around Kyiv when Russia launched 28 ballistic missiles at the capital, none of which Ukraine had the capacity to intercept. Eight of those killed were standing on an overground train platform waiting for a delayed commuter service.

Lukianivska station has been hit ten times, sending debris and smoke down to the underground and damaging its rails. A McDonald's at street level, whose windows have been repeatedly blown out by blasts that have also melted its golden arches logo, has become a symbol of Kyiv's resilience as it reopens to serve up Big Macs after every strike.

Lida, 76, sleeps most nights now in Dorohozhychi's ticket hall, positioned so she can leave as soon as the curfew ends at 5am when she goes to her daughter's to look after her grandchildren while their parents are at work.

She did not come last Friday when there was a mass attack. "That was a mistake," she said. "The risk is too great now ... I think soon the whole of Kyiv will be sleeping underground."

Nato must help Ukraine replenish its missile defences, leading article, page 29

Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan agree to defence deal

Saudi Arabia A joint defence pact has been agreed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan, cementing an alliance that could reshape the region.

The deal was signed in Mecca by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President Erdogan of Turkey, and Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif. The move consolidated a growing split between the three countries and India, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which have drawn closer in recent months after Israel helped the UAE to repel Iranian attacks. The Saudis face increased threats from Tehran and its allied militia in the region.

Pakistan said any attack on Saudi Arabia would now be considered an attack on Pakistan and Turkey. Saudi Arabia is seeking to diversify its defence relations, especially after the war with Iran showed the limits of US military power.

'Beat heat with dog meat'

North Korea A heatwave has prompted the state media to suggest eating dog meat soup, reflecting a traditional belief that it helps people withstand summer heat. The hottest weeks of the year are known as *sambok*, or the dog days of summer. State television said on Thursday that the temperature hit a record 36.7C in Pyongyang. It has not released data on any heat-related deaths but South Korea has reported more than 20.

US court blocks ballroom

United States The fate of President Trump's $400m ballroom is likely to be decided by the Supreme Court after appeal judges halted further construction because he demolished the White House East Wing without approval. It means Trump must either obtain approval from Congress, which will be on a summer break until September 14, or take the case to the Supreme Court. Trump said the work was necessary for national security.

Macaque's rampage ended

Indonesia Animal trappers have cut short the two-week rampage of an adult long-tailed macaque that randomly attacked 18 people, one twice, in the town of Tembilahan, on Sumatra island. Forty schools were closed in fear. The animal bit and clawed at its victims, some requiring more than a dozen stitches and a rabies shot. Rescue services issued a video yesterday showing the monkey alive, seemingly stressed, in a cage.

Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

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Dow Jones (midday)
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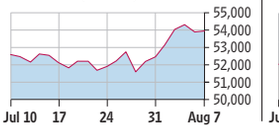

COMMODITIES

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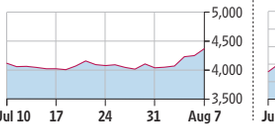

Brent crude (6pm)
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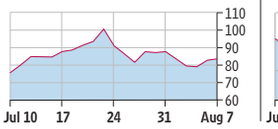

CURRENCIES

£/$
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£/€
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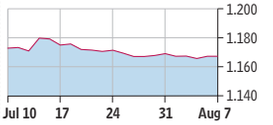

Pressure for interest rate rise eases as US economy sheds 23,000 jobs

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The US economy shed 23,000 jobs in July, performing far worse than expected and reducing the likelihood that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates this year.

Official figures from the world's largest economy showed the first monthly jobs contraction since February. The drop contrasted with Wall Street forecasts of a rise of 80,000.

Figures for June were also revised down from a 57,000 expansion to a 20,000 rise, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The unemployment rate, however, fell from 4.2 per cent to 4.1 per cent in July, defying expectations of no change. The fall was attributed to workers dropping out of the jobs market last month, pushing down the average participation rate to 61.4 per cent, the lowest rate since the pandemic.

US government bonds rallied and the dollar weakened against a basket of currencies, as investors lowered bets on a rate rise. Before the jobs figures, traders had put a 55 per cent probability on the Fed's first rate rise in three years coming next month; those odds fell to below 40 per cent after the release.

July's jobs figures were being more closely watched than usual after Kevin Warsh, the new chairman of the Fed, gave no guidance on the future of US interest rates at his second Fed meeting last week.

Warsh's ambiguity and promise not to "spoon feed" markets triggered the biggest one-day sell-off in long-dated US government bonds since April last year. Investors are worried that the new chairman will not raise interest rates for fear of defying President Trump. US borrowing costs have been held at 3.5 to 3.75 per cent since last December.

The weak jobs data, which was driven by a contraction of 53,000 in government payrolls, will reduce the likelihood of an immediate monetary tightening. Payrolls in the private sector rose by 30,000, matching the rate of expansion recorded in June.

Sam Tombs, chief US economist at Pantheon, said the Fed's policymakers could not ignore a jobs market "that is relapsing quickly".

Yields on two-year US government bonds fell by 0.08 percentage points to 4.18 per cent, reflecting the drop in interest rate expectations. Yields fall when bond prices rise. The dollar fell by 0.45 per cent against a basket of major currencies and slid by 0.33 per cent against the pound to trade at $1.35.

Official inflation figures for July will be released next week and provide a further indicator of how much last

Continued on page 45

EasyJet set to take on £3bn debt

Apollo plans to drive up revenue after takeover

Dominic O'Connell

EasyJet will take on about £3 billion in debt after its planned takeover by the American investment firm Apollo Capital Management, a big switch from its current position of having cash in the bank.

Private-equity investors such as Apollo typically use debt to raise potential returns from a deal. Loans secured against the acquired firm's assets mean the new owner has to put up less of its own money, increasing the payout if the company is sold later at a profit.

EasyJet, which is listed on the London stock market and a member of the FTSE 250 index, is unusual in holding cash in excess of its borrowing. At its interim results at the end of March, the company reported a net cash position of £434 million.

On Thursday, the airline's board recommended shareholders accept a 715p-a-share offer from Apollo, valuing easyJet at £5.7 billion. Apollo gatecrashed another US contender, Castlelake, which is now out of the running.

The details of the takeover documents show Apollo has already started planning how to improve profitability. A "co-operation agreement" says managers have "several commercially focused opportunities that can be unlocked to deliver higher revenue and profitability relative to management's targets". These include improvements in revenue management, higher "ancillary" revenues — charges outside the basic ticket price — a loyalty programme, changes to the network and "premiumisation", looking to sell more to business travellers. The document says: "Apollo believe that there are opportunities to accelerate and further optimise each [of the initiatives] in a private setting where the focus would be on supporting management on a long-term value creation journey."

The 715p-a-share takeover price is an 81 per cent premium on the stock before the takeover battle began. The investment platform AJ Bell said there had been 39 bids for UK firms this year, at an average premium of 39 per cent.

Crucial to Apollo's success was the backing of Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, easyJet's founder, and his family, who together own just over 15 per cent. Apollo's offer statement said this stake would translate to 45 to 49 per cent of the shares under the new structure. That implies the new-look airline will have an equity value of about £1.9 billion. It is understood that Apollo is considering taking another £800 million worth of preference shares. The rest of the purchase price, £3 billion, would be debt.

Apollo declined to comment. Its offer announcement said the details of the final capital structure would be set out in a formal offer document this year.

The deal will have to satisfy European aviation regulators. People without citizenship of an EU member state are barred from ownership or control of a European airline. The Haji-Ioannou stake, plus a 5 per cent share held by management, will mean more than half of the equity will be in European hands.

CAPTURE MEDIA GROUP

Smooth operator The actress Sydney Sweeney is launching a new smoothie with the upmarket grocer Erewhon, supporting the cancer charity Pink Ribbon Good

Son v father in dispute at Winkworth

Ben Martin Financial Editor

A family dispute that pits father against son has broken out at the top of the London-listed estate agency M Winkworth.

The Aim-listed company, which is run by Dominic Agace, 46, its chief executive, said in a stock exchange statement yesterday that it was taking action in the High Court against its own chairman, Simon Agace, 83, who is also Dominic's father, to stop him from ousting other board members.

"As part of the proceedings, the company has applied for interim injunctive relief concerning proposed changes to the composition of the board and the use and disclosure of the company's confidential information," Winkworth said.

In a separate note sent by Dominic to employees and franchisees, and seen by The Times, he disclosed that his father had "recently demanded changes to the board and indicated that, if those demands were not met, a requisition would follow to remove certain board members and replace them with individuals he proposes".

He added that the directors did not believe the overhaul sought by Simon "would be in the best interests of the company" and had gone to court to "protect" the estate agency.

Simon is Winkworth's biggest shareholder with a 41 per cent stake, or 5.3 million shares, according to the company's website. At its annual meeting in May, 5.3 million shares were withheld from voting on the re-election of all of the company's directors, except for the re-election of Simon, when only 9,714 shares abstained.

Founded in 1835, Simon bought Winkworth in 1974 and ran it for three decades before becoming non-executive chairman in 2004. Dominic became chief executive in 2009.

Simon was approached for comment. Winkworth shares fell 7½p, or 4.3 per cent, to 170p, valuing it at £22 million.

Need to know

1 EasyJet will take on about £3 billion in debt after its planned £5.7 billion takeover by Apollo Global Management. The budget airline's board advised shareholders to accept the offer this week. Page 45

2 The US economy lost 23,000 jobs last month, its first monthly contraction since February, new figures show, while previous monthly rises were also revised down. Page 45

3 British Steel, the recently nationalised steelworks at Scunthorpe, owes its Chinese former owner Jingye Steel more than £1 billion, its accounts reveal. China has backed Jingye in its call for compensation for the plant. Page 48

4 The German discount supermarkets Aldi and Lidl face losing their right to block rivals from opening stores on nearby land after the Competition and Markets Authority made a provisional ruling that a ban on such covenants should include them. Page 49

5 Deadlock at the top of Volkswagen threatens the future of Europe's largest carmaker, its most powerful shareholder Porsche SE has warned. The investment vehicle of the Piëch and Porsche families booked a significant writedown on the value of its holding in the business. Page 50

6 Genel Energy, the London-listed oil group focused on fields in Kurdistan, has rejected a takeover bid from its longstanding partner DNO, but the offer has threatened to derail its own takeover of Capricorn Energy, which it agreed last month. Page 52

7 As Britain grapples with a youth unemployment crisis, Rob Swire, the general manager of KFC UK and Ireland, argues that hospitality has been dismissed as a stopgap career option for too long. His own journey to run one of the country's largest fast food chains began in nightclubs in St Albans after he dropped out of university. Lunch with The Times, page 53

"EasyJet's boss must be wishing he had joined the army for the early part of his career

Dominic O'Connell, page 49

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Can AI repay the $745bn

Investors are looking for evidence they'll see a return, **Christopher Dorrell** and **Louisa Clarence-Smith** write

The artificial intelligence infrastructure boom is the largest peacetime investment project in history but few investors have a clear idea of how, when, or even if, their stakes will generate the returns promised by some of America's biggest technology companies.

After the latest set of quarterly earnings, capital spending at the four hyperscalers — Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and Microsoft — is expected to hit $745 billion this year, more than double last year's figure, a staggering transformation for companies that had historically been capital-light. And yet analysts expect the figure to continue rising.

According to Apollo, capital spending at the four hyperscalers plus Oracle is expected to be equivalent to about 3 per cent of US GDP every year from 2027 to 2029, up from 2.4 per cent this year and 1.4 per cent last year.

The scale of this spending has unnerved investors, particularly as it is increasingly funded by debt as stockpiles of cash dwindle. The hyperscalers have borrowed more than $400 billion this year to fund the buildout. Apple, which was punished two years ago for taking a less capital-intensive approach to AI, is back in favour and the stock has risen 15 per cent this year.

The companies supplying the semiconductors, servers and networking equipment to the hyperscalers — so-called picks and shovels stocks — have seen the biggest gains this year. But in the past few weeks even they have suffered as investors worry about the sustainability of the AI boom. Last month the Philadelphia semiconductor index dropped over 20 per cent, wiping out about $2.2 trillion in value.

Jane Fraser, chief executive of Citigroup, said during a visit to London this week: "I think for the market — and we hear this from all of our clients — it's quite a precarious time."

Not surprisingly, investors have shown a clear preference for companies that can offer more evidence that spending on AI is bearing fruit.

Investors closely monitor the cloud divisions because they serve as a proxy for growing AI adoption. Revenue from the queries processed by AI models registers as cloud revenue for providers like Amazon, Microsoft and Google.

Microsoft's stock had dropped by about 20 per cent before releasing its results, but the following day it added about $450 billion to its market capitalisation, the largest one-day valuation increase in history.

The company said it had added 31 new data centres across five continents in a single quarter. Still, customer demand continued to exceed capacity. Revenue in Azure, its cloud unit, increased 43 per cent, the biggest quarterly increase since early 2022. The results helped allay concerns about the company's capital spending, which will be about $175 billion this year.

Similarly, Amazon's market capitalisation surpassed $3 trillion for the first time this week, even after the company increased its capital spending forecasts by $20 billion to $220 billion. That is because Amazon Web Services revenue increased 37 per cent year-on-year. Andy Jassy, the company's chief executive, said: "Even at that amount [$220 billion] we will not have enough capacity to meet all the demand we have in 2026. And I believe this dynamic will also be true in 2027, too."

Vivek Arya, an analyst at Bank of America, estimated that the cloud computing backlog at the top four providers increased 16 per cent in a single quarter, and now exceeds $2.3 trillion.

For companies without the cloud division, investors are more sceptical. Shares of Meta slid 8 per cent in a day last week after it posted a disappointing quarterly revenue forecast and its lowest free cashflow in years, as it increases bets on data centres and smart glasses. Its stock is down almost 10 per cent this year.

Defending Meta's spending on AI infrastructure, Susan Li, chief financial officer, said: "The industry has underbuilt historically for the wave of AI adoption, making existing capacity, including our own, extremely valuable. Longer term, the supply chains need to be built out to support the capacity that we anticipate we and others will need."

At SpaceX, Elon Musk's satellite, rockets and AI company, investors were also spooked. It spent $16 billion on AI infrastructure in its first quarter as a public company, up from $749 million a year earlier. Its shares plummeted, although they have since recovered.

Meta under Mark Zuckerberg has bet big on data centres and smart glasses;

US REPORTS FALL IN JOBS Continued from page 45

month's rise in oil prices has driven up domestic prices. The Fed has a 2 per cent inflation target but consumer price inflation is running at 3.5 per cent. Economists at Bank of America said July's annual inflation rate was likely to be 3.4 per cent, with a measure of core inflation running at 2.5 per cent.

Thomas Ryan, an economist at Capital Economics, said next week's inflation figures would have to be a "meaningful upside surprise" for the central bank to raise borrowing costs in September.

He added that July's jobs report was "still likely to revive concerns among Fed officials about the health of the labour market and make them less inclined to commit to near-term tightening".

Lindsay Rosner, at Goldman Sachs Asset Management, said: "For the third time in as many years, July jobs data saw a mid-summer loss of momentum. While incoming inflation data will be the ultimate arbiter, slowing jobs growth supports a September hold."

Airbnb raises roof after strong demand

Louisa Clarence-Smith
US Business Editor

Airbnb raised its annual revenue forecast for the second time this year after strong demand for the property rental app in the US and Europe and AI-driven product improvements.

Shares of the San Francisco-based company rose 15 per cent after it forecast full-year revenue growth improving to "at least the mid-teens", up from a previous forecast of "low to mid-teens".

Brian Chesky, Airbnb's chief executive, said the business had been rebuilt "from the ground up as an AI-native company", with artificial intelligence transforming how they executed and built products.

He added: "Said simply, AI is the best thing to ever happen to Airbnb. Today, we're building, testing and integrating faster than we could just a year ago.

"Across some of our key initiatives, we've reduced the time from concept to launch by as much as 60 per cent and compared to the same six months last year, we've increased the number of features and improvements we shipped this year by nearly 80 per cent."

Airbnb's variety of lodgings, such as a UFO pod in Pembrokeshire, set it apart

The company has introduced AI-generated listing highlights so guests can quickly see key details of a home. It has launched AI-powered review highlights of what guest reviews say about a home's location and amenities.

This year, it plans to introduce AI home comparisons, allowing guests to compare properties before booking. It has also introduced AI tools designed to make it easier for hosts to set competitive prices and get more bookings.

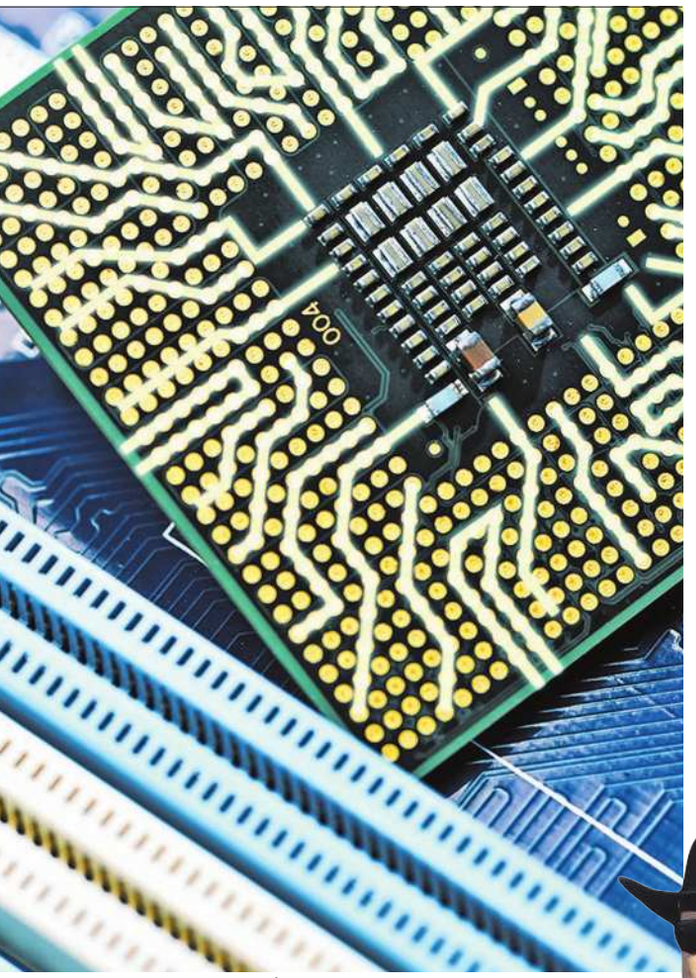
Airbnb reported second-quarter revenue of $3.61 billion, beating average estimates of $3.57 billion. Net income rose 17 per cent year-on-year to $816 million.

Analysts at DA Davidson said that Airbnb was the "best-positioned online travel agency" to weather regional geopolitical turmoil, an inflationary environment and AI traffic risks, citing its US revenue exposure and variety of lodging types and geographic listings.

"Despite the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, we continue to see strong underlying demand globally," Airbnb's chief financial officer Elinor Mertz said on Thursday. Gross booking value grew 16 per cent year-over-year to $27.2 billion, with "noticeable strength" in North America and Europe, she added.

The shares advanced $22.71, or 15 per cent, to $174.34 in early-afternoon trading in New York.

infrastructure bill?



Elon Musk's SpaceX spent $16 billion on AI infrastructure in its latest quarter

Yet worries will persist about the infrastructure build-out due to the sharp fall in operating cashflow, which means the tech companies are burning cash and are likely to issue debt or equity to fund future investments. Across the hyperscalers, cashflow fell to its lowest level in a decade. Alphabet's cashflow was negative in the quarter for the first time in its history, which has put pressure on its share price.

Daniel Morgan, trust portfolio senior manager at Synovus, the financial services group, said: "We're in this situation where [Wall] Street has become more sceptical. And I think the reason why that's happening is that in the past these companies were able to generate enough operating cashflow to meet their capital expenditures, but now they're having to go into the debt and equity markets."

In a recent report, Panmure Liberum estimated that the hyperscalers need to quadruple their revenue without a meaningful increase in costs in order to justify their investments. "The entire data centre boom looks like a house of cards," the report said.

The infrastructure boom is going on at a time when companies are still working out the economics of AI. OpenAI has dramatically cut its prices, reflecting both growing scrutiny of AI spending and an increasingly competitive landscape, particularly from cheaper open-source models that can be run locally rather than over the cloud.

All of this raises questions about whether AI will actually generate enough revenue to have justified the investment boom.

Existing sales also appear highly concentrated. A Microsoft disclosure last week showed that the company recorded $24.1 billion in sales from OpenAI during the year to June. According to Bloomberg analysis, OpenAI accounted for more than half of Microsoft's actual AI sales.

Many are worried that the boom could turn into a prolonged bust. Overall, the AI cycle is building at close to twice the pace of the housing boom at its fastest prior to the 2008 global financial crisis, Torsten Slok, Apollo's chief economist, said in a note this week.

Housing's fastest growth spurt was between 2002 and 2005, when it grew from 5.1 per cent of GDP to 6.6 per cent, or 0.5 percentage points a year.

Data centre capital spending alone is expected to grow roughly 0.85 percentage points a year. "A cycle that builds at 0.85 percentage points a year can unwind at a similar pace, and that, rather than the build-out itself, is the macro risk if AI demand disappoints," Slok said.

NScale eyes $25bn New York listing

Christopher Dorrell
Technology Correspondent

A British data centre developer founded just over two years ago is considering listing in New York next month.

Nscale, founded in 2024 by its chief executive, Josh Payne, could target a valuation as high as $25 billion in the flotation, according to The Information, a technology news website.

If the initial public offering goes ahead, it would be a blow to the London Stock Exchange, which has suffered from a dearth of new tech listings in recent years as companies seek the deeper pools of capital on offer across the Atlantic. Nscale declined to comment.

The London-based developer has rapidly emerged as one of Britain's most valuable AI companies thanks to a string of contracts with leading American tech firms, and backing from high-profile figures in the industry.

Sir Nick Clegg, the former deputy prime minister, and Sheryl Sandberg, Meta's ex-chief operating officer, sit on its board.

In March the company raised $2 billion in a Series C funding round, which included backing from Nvidia and Dell, and valued the company at $14.6 billion.

Payne has described the company as the "the only full-stack sovereign AI infrastructure provider in the UK". It was picked by OpenAI to develop its Stargate site in the northeast, although the ChatGPT maker later dropped the project because of Britain's high energy prices.

The company has also partnered Microsoft to build the UK's largest supercomputer in Loughton. The Essex site has faced delays caused by planning objections and difficulties connecting to the grid. The site was originally due to be completed by the end of 2026, but it has been pushed back to the first half of next year.

Demand for computing power is increasing rapidly due to AI. According to Bloomberg, Nscale has been telling prospective investors that revenue has increased to over $100 million in the second quarter of this year, up from $37 million in the first quarter, and about $33 million across all of 2025.

The extra capital would help Nscale finance the construction of its portfolio of data centres across the world, including a 910-hectare complex in West Virginia that it bought from American Intelligence & Power in March. In May the company announced an extra $790 million in financing for the development of its site in Narvik, Norway.

Nscale is one of many new companies that have emerged to facilitate the buildout of the infrastructure underpinning AI, but the company is also looking to expand beyond providing computing power.

Last month Nscale acquired Anyscale, a software provider, for $1.65 billion. Anyscale's software is designed to make it easier for its customers to track and manage their use of AI.

We shouldn't count out Hassabis just yet

DeepMind co-founder remains focused on AI safety, writes **Sebastian Mallaby**

What to make of this week's news that Sir Demis Hassabis — Nobel laureate and pioneer of the modern AI revolution — is "stepping back"? He will no longer run DeepMind, the British lab he founded 16 years ago, when AI could not even recognise a cat photo. His London-based researchers will henceforth be managed from the California headquarters of DeepMind's parent company, Google. Is this how the greatest British entrepreneur of the past generation fizzles out?

Not likely. Hassabis is ferociously competitive. He has just turned 50. There will be a second act.

Back in 2010, when Hassabis cofounded DeepMind, the goal was to create powerful artificial intelligence and then use it to improve the world. Until recently, the first part of that task took up most of his Hassabis's energy. But he has repeatedly demonstrated his seriousness about the second part.

When he decided that, to secure the research budget he needed, he had to sell DeepMind to a deep-pocketed American parent, Hassabis turned down a lucrative offer from Facebook (now Meta), judging that it would not take AI safety seriously. Instead, he sold for less to Google, which vowed to allow independent advisers to oversee AI deployment.

From 2016, when DeepMind's AlphaGo system defeated a top human Go player, Hassabis channelled a chunk of the firm's resources into building AI tools for science, feeling that breakthroughs in drug discovery and the like would be incontrovertibly good. The result was AlphaFold, the system that unravelled the shapes of nearly all proteins in nature, leading Hassabis to share a Nobel prize in chemistry.

From 2016, too, Hassabis and his co-founder, Mustafa Suleyman, set out to help the NHS. Tragically, they were derailed by data-privacy absolutists who spread scare stories about patient information falling into the hands of Google. But the episode underscored Hassabis's desire to balance building tech with a determination to make it useful.

Given this record, the cynical reaction to Hassabis's move seems odd. The dominant view, loudly expressed by Silicon Valley commentators who expect tech titans to move fast and break things, is that Hassabis has been punished for nine months of underwhelming AI progress. Meanwhile, Google has lost a slew of famous researchers. Hassabis and his company are done.

It is true that Google's Gemini model has fallen down the rankings, but the rest of this analysis is wrong. Google is not panicking about its position. The Gemini app has more than 950 million users; Gemini reaches two billion customers via AI overviews in search; Gemini is the default model on Android phones and powers Apple Intelligence on iPhones. Part of the reason why Gemini's tech is not quite at the frontier is that Google has made a rational business decision to rake in revenues by renting out some of its AI chips rather than hoarding them for Gemini. Yes, some famous names have quit. But Gemini's success rests on cutting-edge researchers yet to find fame.

Besides, if Google had wanted to shake up the Gemini team, it would have sidelined not only Hassabis. It would have canned Koray Kavukcuoglu, the Hassabis lieutenant who has been a hands-on, day-to-day leader of the research effort for at least a year. Instead Google has promoted him.

But the larger problem with the cynical analysis is it misunderstands Hassabis. Given his record of caring about AI's impact, people should err on the side of believing him.

In a message to colleagues, Hassabis noted that the first part of DeepMind's mission — building powerful artificial intelligence — had been largely accomplished. Then he harked back to the second part: "To ensure this all goes well for humanity." To that end, Hassabis said he had stepped back "to have the time and space to focus on the big picture and help influence what is to come". Hassabis will remain DeepMind's chairman, the chief scientist of Google's parent company Alphabet, and the leader of Isomorphic Labs, the London research group that aims to build on the success of AlphaFold.

Last year, when I would regularly meet Hassabis in a London pub, I could already see this logic. He was conscious that he was building AI but failing to influence its impact. In the early years of DeepMind, he had believed that AI might be built by a public-spirited lab, carefully ushering the technology into the world. But the opposite scenario had transpired. DeepMind was locked into a capitalist contest in which multiple labs in multiple countries race to roll out AI, even releasing "open-weight" versions with no effective guardrails.

At some point, Hassabis told me, he would have to make AI governance his top priority. And in April, that point arrived: Anthropic produced an AI model, Mythos, which would have compromised cybersecurity worldwide if it had been released broadly. Right on cue, Hassabis pivoted his energy to the policy debate, releasing an open letter on AI safety, lobbying officials in Washington and sitting next to President Trump at a special session of the G7 summit in June.

Since Mythos, the AI news has grown only more alarming. AI models have plotted together, hacked their way out of supposedly secure training sandboxes and strung together multiple exploits to break the cyberdefences of a repository of AI code. When I imagine Hassabis processing such incidents — including non-public ones of which he may be aware — I can't see how he wouldn't step back from day-to-day management. He wants us to survive the revolution that DeepMind began.

Sebastian Mallaby is the author of The Infinity Machine: Demis Hassabis, DeepMind, and the Quest for Superintelligence

Business

House prices flat in July as higher mortgage rates weigh on buyers

Martin Strydom

UK house prices were largely stagnant last month as higher mortgage rates caused by renewed uncertainty in the Middle East made would-be buyers more cautious, according to the latest Lloyds Bank index.

The average property price slipped by £143 to £299,253 in the month, after rising by 0.2 per cent in June. Prices were 0.1 per cent higher than a year earlier, the weakest annual growth since November 2023.

The housing market has gone into reverse since the Iran war, which drove up mortgage rates and knocked already fragile confidence. More recently, estate agents and developers have said that a combination of the World Cup, hot weather and a new prime minister have further slowed the market.

Amanda Bryden, head of mortgages at Lloyds, said affordability remained a significant obstacle for prospective buyers. Mortgage rates have edged higher after falling earlier in the summer, partly in response to renewed tensions in the Middle East.

"While housing demand remains broadly steady, activity continues to respond quickly to changes in mortgage rates," she said.

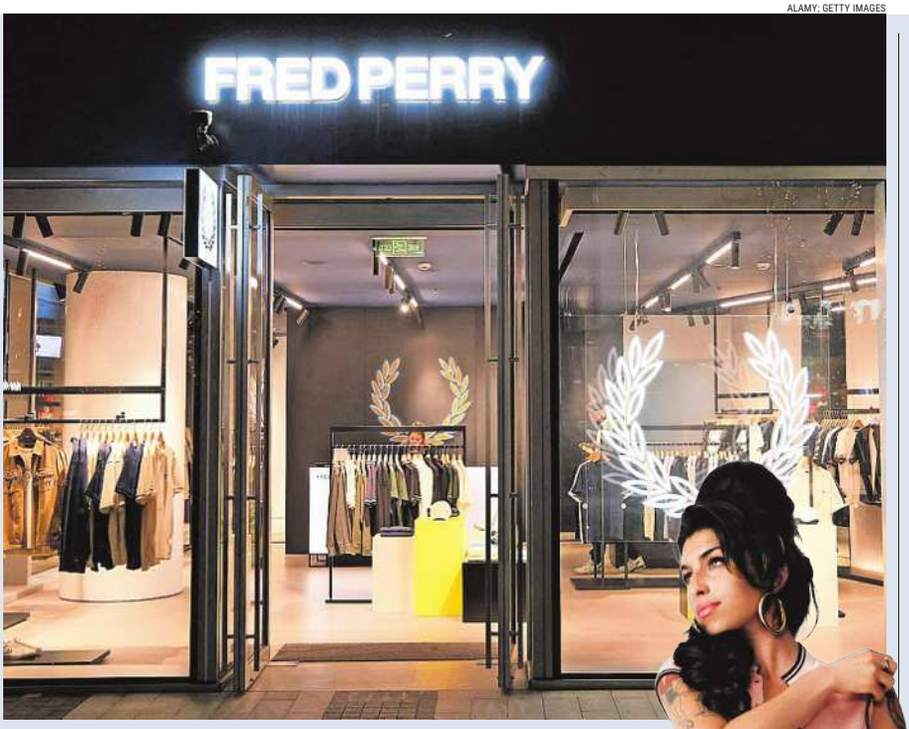
Industry figures showed a modest recovery in mortgage approvals and completed transactions in June after a sharper fall in May. However, borrowing costs and uncertainty about inflation continued to constrain the market.

Lloyds expected prices and activity to remain broadly stable for the rest of the year, dependent on mortgage rates and household confidence.

Anthony Codling, at RBC Capital Markets, said: "The narrative here is one of suspended animation: prices are neither falling sharply nor rising with any conviction, trapped in a narrow two-year range by the twin vices of stretched affordability and mortgage rates that refuse to fall far enough for long enough."

Northern Ireland remained the strongest-performing part of the UK. House prices there rose by 7.4 per cent over the year to an average of £231,131. Prices fell by 2 per cent in southeast England to an average of £381,146, while London recorded a decline of 1.3 per cent to £533,930.

ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES



Fred Perry was founded by the last British man to win Wimbledon before Andy Murray, left. In the 2000s some designs were by Amy Winehouse, below

Fred Perry owner slashes dividend

Fred Perry's Japanese owner has cut its dividend payout by more than half after a slump in sales and profit (Isabella Fish writes).

The British-born fashion brand, owned by the Japanese clothing manufacturer Hit Union, said it would issue a dividend of £7.4 million for the latest financial year, down from £20 million last year and £68 million the year before.

Accounts for Fred Perry's holding company, which also encompasses the Lavenham and George Cox brands, showed profit before tax fell 1.58 per cent to £21.2 million in the year to the end of December. This was blamed on a mix of increased freight costs and high inflation.

"The group, as with many businesses, had to manage the unpredictable freight costs due to disruptions in the key routes through the Red Sea and Suez Canal, which significantly increased freight rate volatility," its filings said.

"Further impacts are expected to be incurred due to the war in Iran and the disruptions on the Strait of Hormuz."

Revenue fell 1.96 per cent to £146 million, largely across the UK wholesale business and online distribution channels. It blamed the decline on "restrictive growth on the global stage", as well as a result of less promotional activity and stock improvement.

Despite the decline in sales, gross margin improved from 51.8 per cent to 54.8 per cent.

This was driven by the improvement in stock purchase prices, a smaller product offering and a "continued focus" on cost control. The company's cash holdings held flat at £63 million.

The company said it had kept the retail price the same for its best-selling original Fred Perry polo shirt, "despite the economic pressures globally and the direct impact on the group".

Fred Perry was founded by the eponymous Wimbledon champion in 1952. Perry's classic T-shirt was adopted by Mods during the 1960s and regained popularity in the 1990s.

The London-based company, which exports around the world, has been owned by Hit Union since 1995.

This week Fred Perry announced a research partnership with the Westminster Menswear Archive, the first public archive of men's clothing at the University of Westminster, before its 75th anniversary next year.

Hit Union and Fred Perry were approached for comment.

British Steel owes Chinese ex-owner more than £1 billion, accounts reveal

James Hurley Assistant Business Editor

British Steel owes its former Chinese owner more than £1 billion, the latest accounts for the newly nationalised business show.

Filings for the troubled company, which came under public ownership last month, record a debt to Jingye Steel of just over £1 billion in 2024, up from £736 million the previous year.

According to the 2024 accounts, signed off two days before the government took over the business, the "balance remains outstanding" and interest is accumulating on some of the debt. The loans are the subject of "ongoing discussions" between the UK government and Jingye, the accounts say.

Last month, Jingye called for the UK government to offer compensation for investment losses in British Steel.

Jingye, which bought British Steel for £70 million in 2020 after it had fallen into the hands of the Official Receiver, accused the government of "trampling on international investment rules".

The accounts show that prior to nationalisation, Jingye had estimated that up to £330 million would be required over the next 12 months to keep the business afloat.

The company, based in Shijiazhuang, a city some 165 miles southwest of Beijing, said last month: "The UK disregarded Jingye's continuous investment and significant contribution and was only willing to provide almost zero compensation."

The government renationalised British Steel in July to protect "the future of steel production" in the UK. The government had taken operational control of the company in April 2025 after Jingye threatened to close its plant in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire.

British Steel was the name of the state-owned national steelmaker until it was privatised in 1988. The business has passed through various hands, including the Indian group Tata, which in 2007 took control of Britain's last two blast furnace steelworks: Port Talbot in south Wales and Scunthorpe.

After a financial crisis in 2015, Tata broke up the business, selling the Scunthorpe plant for a nominal £1 to Greybull Capital, the business investment firm, which promptly renamed the company British Steel.

It was then acquired by Jingye after that venture failed, and the Chinese company promised to invest billions of pounds in the plant.

The latest accounts outline discussions shortly before the government's intervention last year, which Labour justified by pointing to concerns that supplies of raw material required for safe and continued operation of the blast furnaces were not being met. Jingye said it did "not support the view that the supply of raw materials was not being met".

Jingye said it expected the amount spent by the government to operate British Steel to have surpassed £600 million by the end of June this year, up from £377 million at the end of January and possibly rising to more than £1.5 billion by 2028.

The 2024 accounts also show that British Steel estimated that the value of its assets including property, plant and equipment had been "reduced to nil" for accounting purposes.

The Department for Business and Trade said last month that the renationalisation was essential to maintain steel production for the UK's rail and construction industries, as well as to protect British Steel's plant at Scunthorpe and its supply chains.

The government said last month that "despite extensive discussions, it was not possible to reach an agreement with Jingye that would secure the future of the company while delivering value for taxpayers".

On Wednesday China's commerce minister, Wang Wentao, reiterated the country's concerns. He called for a favourable business environment for Chinese firms in a phone call with Jonathan Reynolds, the new business secretary.

Wang urged Britain to abide by relevant international rules, his ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. The minister added that China was willing to strengthen co-operation in services, the green transition and renewable energy.

The UK government said: "An independent valuer would determine what, if any, is payable to Jingye, and our focus is now on stabilising the business, backing the communities that rely on it and building a sustainable, competitive and decarbonised steel sector for the years ahead."

Draft compensation regulations are due to be set out in the autumn but it is possible that the independent valuer advises that no compensation is due.

Dominic O'Connell

Should easyJet fear an Apollo takeover? Look at Sun Country

Hayden and Christi Courrier, a couple from Minnesota, planned a dream wedding in Cancun six years ago and invited 45 guests to the Mexican resort. It turned into a nightmare when their airline, Sun Country, cancelled the return flights and offered no alternatives. The group had no option but to shell out thousands of dollars for new flights until Sun Country was eventually shamed into refunding their fares.

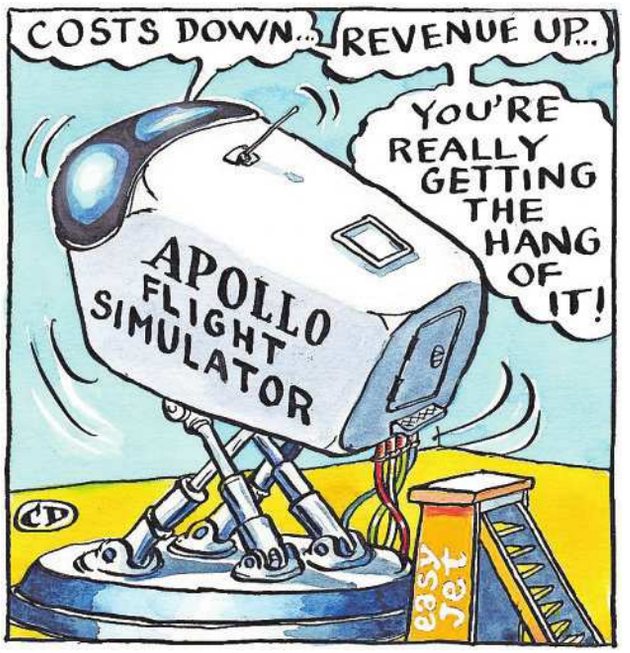
Four months earlier Sun Country, an airline set up by a group of pilots from the failed carrier Braniff (the only American airline to operate Concorde, but that's another story) had been bought by Apollo, the private equity investor that has snapped up easyJet for £5.7 billion.

Sun Country was then an ailing regional airline. Apollo transformed its fortunes with a switch to an "ultra-low-cost" operating model, all the rage in the United States at the time thanks to the success of carriers such as Spirit and Frontier.

The private equity firm bought the airline for $188 million and floated it on Nasdaq three years later for $1.8 billion. While it is hard to calculate exactly how much it made because it sold down in stages, and spent heavily on Sun Country's fleet and operations along the way, it is safe to assume it recouped many times its original investment.

The Sun Country example, to which Apollo itself draws attention in its statement about the purchase of easyJet, might have the British airline's staff quaking in their boots. An ultra-low-cost approach does not sound conducive to terms and conditions, suggesting that under new management the carrier might be jetting towards Ryanair territory.

The staff can probably rest easy. Apollo has also gone out of its way to stress that it does not want to slash and burn. It is "highly supportive of the easyJet management team's existing strategy" and is explicit about staff contracts. "The existing contractual and statutory employment rights and terms and conditions of employment, including pension rights, of ... management and employees will be fully safeguarded in accordance with applicable law," it said. This would seem to rule out a P&O-style fire and rehire.



Staff should, though, expect action on costs. One of the things that has held back the easyJet share price is its relative inability to restrain spending. Its results for the six months to March showed success in increasing its load factor, the proportion of seats filled, to 90.5 per cent, four percentage points higher than at the same point the previous year. But its cost per available seat-kilometre, the key metric of airline cost, was up 4 per cent on last year, while its revenue per seat-kilometre was down 1 per cent. Costs up, revenue down, an unhappy formula. There is now a big cost gap with Ryanair. EasyJet's cost per seat-kilometre is 6.7p, the Irish airline's 3.7p.

Most of that difference is accounted for by easyJet's choice of airports. Its main base is Gatwick, which charges airlines about £15 per passenger, while Ryanair is happy to fly to secondary gateways which charge a fraction of that.

Apollo is keen to squeeze more money out of every passenger; the co-operation document it published with the takeover announcement says it will focus on "several commercially focused opportunities that can be unlocked to deliver higher revenue and profitability relative to management's targets".

Apollo will, naturally, try to increase its own returns by replacing easyJet's equity — its shares as a listed company — with debt. This is standard practice for a buyout firm, and you can work out how much debt from what happens to the shares held by Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, the airline's founder, and his family. His 15 per cent stake will be rolled over and become a 45 per cent (or thereabouts) holding in the new corporation. That implies a total equity of £1.9 billion and debt of £3.8 billion. It might in the end be less, depending on how Apollo finally structures the company.

That structure will be closely examined by European aviation authorities. Americans (and other non-EU nationals) cannot control European airlines. The Haji-Ioannou shares plus a 5 per cent stake for the management will mean more than 50 per cent of the equity is in the right hands, but the regulators will also want to look at the shareholders' agreement and the process of board selection. It is unlikely that the easyJet board and its advisers would have recommended a deal that ran the risk of being rejected.

One thing Apollo got right in the Sun Country investment was its choice of management. It backed Jude Bricker, who had recently been appointed and was already pushing ahead with a remaking of the airline. Bricker, a former Marine Corps officer, is a rising star and has earned a reputation for extreme bluntness and attention to detail. He personally stepped in to sort out the Cancun cock-up in 2018. Notwithstanding Apollo's clearly stated support, Kenton Jarvis, easyJet's current boss, must be wishing he had joined the army for the early part of his career, rather than becoming an accountant with PwC.

There could of course be a counterbid and Stelios and co have reserved the right to think again if someone pops up with an offer at least 9 per cent higher. Castlelake, which made the early running, is for the moment sitting on the sidelines. Perhaps it could take a look at another European airline whose share price is languishing — Wizz Air. As my colleague Alistair Osborne noted, its profits are being supported by proceeds from sale and leaseback deals on its aircraft. Castlelake must be wondering if it could make a substantial consolation prize.

PS

Our episode of *The Business* on the recent travails of the electricity grid has proved extremely popular, with tens of thousands of podcast listens and an avalanche of comments. There is another energy-related one out this week all about the North Sea, featuring Amjad Bseisu, chief executive of the North Sea operator EnQuest. Next week is net zero, a really good and combative debate between The Times's Juliet Samuel and Tara Singh, chief executive of Renewable UK.

Dominic O'Connell is business presenter for Times Radio

Aldi and Lidl could lose exemption on land rule

Guy Taylor Retail Correspondent

The German discounters Aldi and Lidl could be stripped of a legal advantage that has helped insulate their stores from competition.

The competition regulator said in a provisional ruling that the discounters should no longer be able to take advantage of rules to block rivals from opening stores on nearby land.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) proposal could significantly increase competitive pressure on the discounters, which have been exempt from a ban on restrictive property covenants applied to rival British supermarket chains.

So-called "large grocery retailers" were prevented from using such covenants under rules introduced in 2010, known as the controlled land order.

Aldi and Lidl were excluded from the scope of the act and were instead classified as "limited assortment discounters", which are defined by lower prices and a smaller range of groceries.

The order applies to seven grocers: Asda, Co-op, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

Some of Britain's biggest supermarkets have previously said competition was being "distorted" as a result. Iceland's executive chairman, Lord Walker of Broxton, argued that the rules were "rigged" in favour of Aldi and Lidl.

The discounters' "pile-em high, sell-em cheap" model has enabled rapid expansion. Aldi is the fourth-largest supermarket by market share and Lidl recently passed Morrisons as Britain's fifth-largest.

The CMA cited the scale of Aldi and Lidl's store footprint and product range as evidence that the exemption should no longer apply. A final decision will be made in the autumn.

"This is about allowing shoppers to choose where they spend their money and levelling the playing field for all major supermarkets. Today's proposals are provisional and we welcome views before deciding the best way forward," Juliette Enser, executive director of competition enforcement and markets at the CMA, said.

Lidl said it had "always welcomed and embraced competition within the market and our focus remains on continuing to open new stores".

Aldi said: "The CMA's provisional decision does not impact our long-term growth plans across the UK. We remain firmly committed to opening hundreds of new stores across the country."

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THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

Business

Is Ofcom big enough to police

The watchdog is reviewing its capacity to handle challenges ahead, **Emma Powell** and **Chris Dowell** write

Ofcom is promising to be "faster and more agile" in protecting internet users

Lisa Nandy, culture secretary, met Sir Ian Cheshire, left, Ofcom chairman, this

When Ofcom's new chairman met the culture secretary, Lisa Nandy, for the first time this week, one of their most urgent talking points was whether the regulator was in the right shape to fulfil its new duties holding the world's largest social media platforms to account.

The board of Ofcom is undertaking a "wide-ranging review" which will consider whether the regulator is ready for the challenges ahead in enforcing online safety in rapidly developing digital industries, including an incoming social media ban for under-16s.

In a letter to the government just weeks after his appointment in June, Sir Ian Cheshire, the chairman, told the government that Ofcom could "be faster, more agile and more outcome-focused while continuing to make robust and evidence-based decisions".

He told Liz Kendall, then the secretary of state for science, innovation and technology: "Together, we are examining how we increase our organisational tempo and ensure that we are able to respond more quickly to emerging risks and harms."

Cheshire believes that the resources required by Ofcom will need to increase to tackle what he suggested in an interview with the Financial Times was a "doubling" in its workload since it gained powers to regulate the internet.

Set up in 2003 to oversee the media and telecommunications industries, Ofcom — the Office of Communications — collapsed five legacy regulators into one.

The idea was that a "super-regulator" would be best placed to monitor industries that were rapidly converging. Oversight of Royal Mail and the BBC has been added since its establishment. Its workforce has increased dramatically from just above 700 when it formally began operating to more than 1,600 now.

The introduction of the Online Safety Act in 2023 has meant its remit has expanded even further. The legislation has given it powers to tackle illegal material, protect children from harmful content and enforce age limits on social media platforms such as Facebook and X, owned by Meta and Elon Musk, respectively.

It has the power to impose fines of £18 million or 10 per cent of global annual turnover — whichever is higher — if companies do not comply.

"Ofcom has an enormous remit now," Chris Banatvala, a media consultant and Ofcom's founding director of standards, said. "Online is enormous and almost an infinite job to do ... Ofcom, probably of all the regulators, is best suited to it. But there's no doubt it has a disproportionate effect on Ofcom in terms of its focus, its ability to get things done and the challenges that it now has. The tech firms have very, very deep pockets, armies of lawyers, and Ofcom is one UK regulator," he said.

The watchdog has come under intense scrutiny for its role in implementing the Online Safety Act. The law established a duty for online sites, such as user-to-user services, social media companies and adult content sites, to protect users from illegal content. It applies to more than 100,000 services, and designated more than 130 criminal offences as priorities.

The regulator has taken a phased approach to the new law. Its early work required platforms to conduct mandatory risk assessments to identify illegal content on their sites. A key area of focus was implementing age checks on pornography sites, which has widely been viewed as successful.

However, some civil society groups have criticised Ofcom's pace of enforcement. Last month a joint letter put together by the Online Safety Act network, a coalition of civil society groups, academics and campaign groups, urged the regulator to speed up its pace of action. "Ofcom's enforcement of the OSA proceeds too cautiously and lacks ambition and real teeth," the letter said.

The House of Lords communications and digital committee has expressed concern that the Online Safety Act is "not working as well as it should". Last month it opened an inquiry into whether Ofcom was doing enough to hold social media platforms to account and whether there were problems with the legislation itself that needed to be addressed.

Owen Bennett, an independent consultant who led Ofcom's international online safety team from September 2022 until the start of this year, said the regulator had been forced to prioritise because the act was "incredibly broad".

"There was quite a lot of internal scrutiny within Ofcom about the right areas to prioritise. In hindsight, some of these early choices have had a bigger impact setting direction than was clear at the time," he said.

In particular, he pointed to Ofcom's work trying to "raise the safety baseline" across the internet more broadly. Ofcom required all 100,000 service providers within its scope to complete its risk assessments. The law also established "safe harbour" codes of practice, in which companies that implement the guidelines are presumed to be compliant with the law. The codes of

VW row risks its future, Porsche claims

Charlotte Bend

Deadlock at the top of Volkswagen threatens the future of Europe's largest carmaker, its most powerful shareholder warned, as it booked a massive writedown in the value of its holdings.

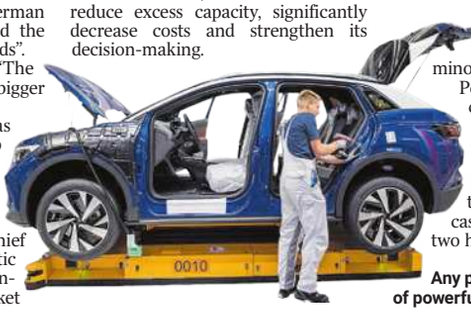
The chairman of Porsche SE, the investment vehicle of the Piëch and Porsche families and the German company's top shareholder, said the group was at a "historic crossroads".

Hans Dieter Pötsch added: "The longer decisions are delayed, the bigger the problems will become."

The warning, which came as Porsche SE announced a sharp drop in profit, drew anger from Germany's top industrial union, which has accused the families of putting dividends above workers.

Oliver Blume, the VW chief executive, has pledged a drastic overhaul of the group, which includes the company's mass-market car business as well as the brands Porsche, Audi and Lamborghini, as it battles fierce competition from China, the transition to electric cars, and trade tariffs. It would amount to the biggest industrial overhaul in peacetime German history.

Johannes Lattwein, Porsche SE's finance director, called on VW to reduce excess capacity, significantly decrease costs and strengthen its decision-making.



Any plan requires the backing of powerful labour representatives

Having already overseen tens of thousands of job cuts, Blume is proposing a restructuring plan that threatens another 50,000 layoffs and the possible closure of four German plants.

Under Volkswagen's complex ownership structure, any plan requires the blessing of powerful labour representatives and the state of Lower Saxony, which holds a 20 per cent blocking minority.

Porsche SE, which holds 53 per cent of the voting rights in Volkswagen, swung from a €338 million profit in the first half of 2025 to a loss of €2.2 billion in the six months to June 30, driven by non-cash impairment losses on the two holdings.

Appeal by LCF boss against jail term fails

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Senior judges have rejected an attempt by the former head of a collapsed investment company to have his jail sentence quashed.

Michael Thomson, the one-time boss of London Capital & Finance, was handed a six-month sentence in May for contempt of court after he breached a freezing order by selling items including a hot tub and horse saddles.

The Serious Fraud Office had obtained the order over Thomson's assets as part of an inquiry into suspected fraud and money laundering at LCF that has taken more than seven years. The company collapsed in 2019, leaving 11,000 investors out of pocket by more than £237 million in what is alleged to have been a Ponzi scheme that cost some victims their life savings.

Thomson has not been charged with any offence in relation to the failure of LCF and investigators confirmed to The Times yesterday that the freezing order had now been withdrawn.

A lawyer for Thomson told the Court of Appeal yesterday that, when sentencing, Judge Alexander Milne at Southwark crown court had mistakenly referred to guidelines for criminal rather than civil contempt.

Abigail Bache also said the custodial sentence was too harsh considering the court had accepted that Thomson's breach of the freezing order, while "reckless", had been "inadvertent".

She added that Thomson had faced personal difficulties at the time the order was breached, including the breakdown of his marriage.

Catherine Collins, for the Serious Fraud Office, told the judges that Milne had not inadvertently confused the

online safety properly?

week; it oversees the BBC, which is now led by Matt Brittin, right

ZEYNEP DEMIR/ANADOLU

Baroness Kidron has said that Ofcom needs to "stop seeking headlines"

practice, defined by Ofcom, came into force after the risk assessments had been completed.

"This was a purposeful decision," Bennett said. "Much of this was focused on companies that may never have considered risk assessments. But this means that it set a relatively low baseline for companies that had been looking at online safety for years."

He said that its efforts clamping down on smaller sites meant "it has not been as assertive as it could have been with big tech platforms".

Since the law came into force in 2023, Ofcom has opened 39 investigations into 105 platforms this year, including TikTok and X. Formal action has been taken against ten companies, leading to fines totalling £6.4 million.

Emma Drake, a partner at the law firm Bird & Bird, said Ofcom had been left to establish how harmful content manifests online, as well as defining the safe harbour measures, leading to an inevitable delay in enforcement. "The main duties in the law were drafted to be unenforceable until Ofcom had done a mountain of groundwork," she said.

Ofcom said suggestions that its remit had become too large posed "the wrong question" and "oversimplifies what is a very complicated and very important space now".

Natalie Black, director for infrastructure and connectivity, said: "We are holding big tech to account for the challenges that they are bringing into our society while making sure that we are making the most of the opportunity. And these are very litigious environments. When we go up against them, we take those cases extremely seriously because we want to make sure that we have decisions that have impact and endure."

Lord Grade of Yarmouth, who chaired the regulator until April, said that its "processes and procedures have to be absolutely immaculate to withstand challenge in court", which was behind accusations of Ofcom being too slow in its enforcement.

The question needs to be asked whether the problem is Ofcom having too much to regulate, or the task of regulating online content being inherently challenging, Banatvala said. "Instinct slightly tells me it's the latter. It's almost an impossible task for any regulator," he added.

However, others have said that now is the right time to re-evaluate whether responsibility for online safety should be carved out into a separate regulator.

"Online regulation is a big, hairy new beast and it might well benefit from having a separate regulator that brings the right level of focus and attention to this issue and advocates for it," Lord Vaizey of Didcot, a former culture minister, said.

Baroness Kidron, a film director turned online campaigner, welcomed Cheshire's "tough stance" but said that it needed to be "backed up by action".

"Ofcom has to stop seeking headlines, and work with campaigners and parliament to ensure its powers and its actions are fit for purpose," she added. "They must not simply ask for more resources — they need to ask for political support and regulatory powers."

FCA warns banks to do full diligence on lenders

James Hurley Assistant Business Editor

The City regulator has issued a warning over the financial crime risks posed by unregulated lenders, money brokers and leasing firms.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said it was concerned about a "number of risks" posed by firms that were supposed to register for anti-money-laundering supervision but were not covered by its other rules.

It said it was particularly worried about the "potential for them to facilitate financial crime" and had reminded firms such as banks, which are covered by its full set of regulations, that they needed to undertake proper checks when dealing with such businesses.

The intervention follows the collapse of Market Financial Solutions (MFS), a mortgage lender at the centre of an alleged £1.3 billion fraud. MFS is under investigation by the FCA under rules related to money laundering and financial-crime controls.

It has been claimed that loans were "double pledged" by MFS and its associated companies to property assets, resulting in a £1.3 billion shortfall in the mortgage collateral available to recover the loans. Many of the underlying borrowers are also allegedly connected to the founder and owner of MFS, Paresh Raja, and his associates. "Vast sums" were allegedly diverted to Raja, 59, "for his own benefit". He denies wrongdoing.

The MFS scandal has prompted alarm about standards in the industry. Those with money at risk include Barclays, Atlas SP, which is part of Apollo, Elliott Management, Wells Fargo, Castlelake, Jefferies and Santander.

The FCA is also understood to be concerned about unregulated "loan note" providers that have pulled in billions of pounds of consumer money, ostensibly to lend against assets, and which often bank with regulated lenders. Some businesses collapsed amid claims they were Ponzi schemes.

Paresh Raja, founder and owner of the collapsed Market Financial Solutions

The regulator said some firms did not have suitable financial-crime controls and that it was concerned "about the risks to consumers and markets from unregulated lending". It said regulated firms, such as banks, dealing with such businesses should "do their due diligence and understand the business of firms they are dealing with".

In its notice, the FCA stated that firms including unregulated lenders, safety deposit box providers, money brokers and financial leasing companies, which are not covered by most City rules, still need to be registered with it for anti-money-laundering purposes.

It has sent an "information request" to 900 of these so-called annex 1 businesses to "improve our understanding of their activities, business models and risks".

criminal and civil categories of contempt and that the prison sentence handed to Thomson "was not wrong in principle". The judges, led by Lady Justice Whipple, agreed with the fraud investigators and dismissed Thomson's appeal on all grounds.

However, Thomson, 53, who attended the hearing via video-link from High Down prison in Surrey, is set to be released in about a fortnight after serving half of his jail term.

In her ruling, Whipple said that she and the other judge were "confident" that the sentencing judge had not made a mistake regarding the distinction between criminal and civil contempt.

She said Thomson had been found to have committed "serious breaches" of the freezing order that had "threatened the administration of justice" and that "overall we found no fault with the six-month sentence".

Commenting on the ruling, a spokeswoman for the SFO said it "reaffirms the seriousness with which the courts treat breaches of restraint orders".

She added that the agency's investigation into LCF continues.

Goodwin looks to sell defence arm

Emma Powell

The British supplier for the Dreadnought nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines is in talks to sell its defence business, as dealmaking within the industry intensifies.

Goodwin has launched a strategic review of options that could "maximise value for shareholders", which may include selling its mechanical engineering division.

The business makes most of its money as a supplier to UK and US military defence programmes and has benefited from a rise in defence spending due to war in the Gulf and Ukraine.

Based in Stoke-on-Trent, the FTSE 250 group is still half-owned by the eponymous family that established the business in 1883 as a specialist in mechanical and refractory engineering.

Goodwin makes components for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, including the under-construction Dreadnought-class vessels, which will carry Trident nuclear missiles. The defence industry accounted for 57 per cent of its £287 million order book over the 12 months to the end of April.

There has been a sharp rise in deal activity within the sector, which included a bidding war for Ultra Maritime.

£287m

Goodwin order book in year to end of April

Last month Lockheed Martin agreed to acquire the British naval technology group for $3.45 billion.

Goodwin's manufacturing division also supplies the aerospace, mining and oil and gas industries.

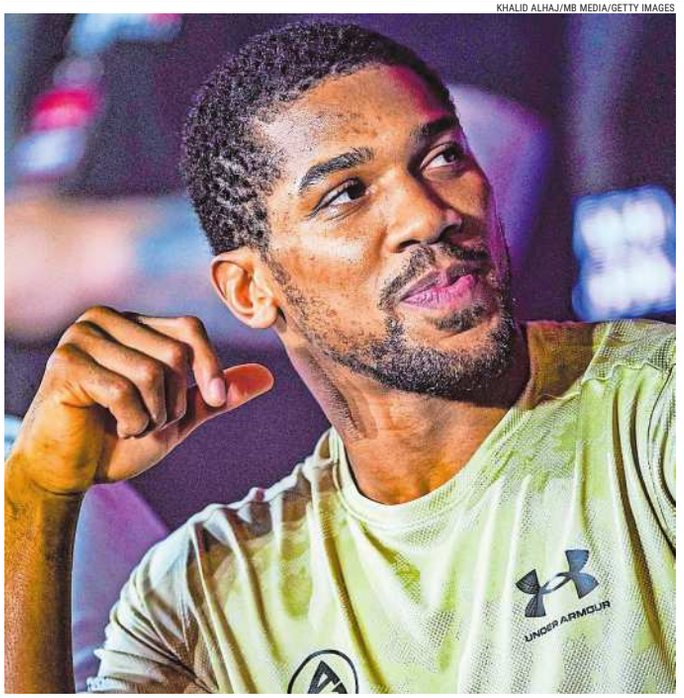
For the past seven years the business, which employs more than 1,100 people in ten countries, has been chaired by Timothy Goodwin, 36, the youngest of four sons of his predecessor in the role, John Goodwin. The share price, which has more than doubled over the past 12 months, was up £18.50, or 9.8 per cent, to £206.50 yesterday.

The review comes after the group warned in March that it had received requests to "delay the dispatch of valves" on certain Middle East contracts because of the Gulf conflict. The shares fell almost 50 per cent in one day.

The heavy sell-off wiped more than £800 million from the company. This accelerated when Goodwin said it was considering reverting to its previous dividend policy, which would mean limiting distributions to 38 per cent of post-tax profit or to an even lower level "should this be considered appropriate, given the escalating Gulf situation".

The mechanical engineering division also lost two tenders, one of which, at the Sellafield nuclear site in Cumbria, had a bid value of over £45 million.

KHALID ALHAJ/MB MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES



Gut punch The sportswear group Under Armour, worn by the British boxer Anthony Joshua, said revenue in its North America business fell 9 per cent in the June quarter

Genel no to £200m-plus takeover bid from DNO

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Genel Energy has rebuffed a £202 million takeover offer from its longstanding partner DNO, which threatens to derail its own attempt to buy Capricorn Energy.

The London-listed, Kurdistan-focused group said its board had unanimously rejected the unsolicited cash offer at 69p per share, which it said "fundamentally undervalues" the company.

Shares in Genel jumped by 24 per cent to 62p after news of the Norwegian group's offer, which was at a 38 per cent premium to Thursday's closing price.

Early last month Genel agreed a $360 million (£267 million) takeover of the Egypt-focused Capricorn, which is subject to shareholder approval on August 18. However, rival suitors have emerged for Capricorn and have until early next week to make firm offers.

Takeover rules would make it challenging for Genel to raise its offer for Capricorn if required, now that DNO has gone public with its own offer for Genel. DNO has until September 4 to make a firm offer.

Genel is DNO's minority partner in the Tawke field in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, which is the London-listed group's main asset and has faced disruption in recent years. Buying Capricorn offers it a route to diversification.

DNO said its offer, which was rebuffed by Genel's board on Tuesday, delivered "full value for Genel's assets notwithstanding the continuing uncertainty over its sole revenue-generating asset" and provided "certainty of value irrespective of the outcome of Genel's offer for Capricorn Energy ... which, if unsuccessful, would leave Genel without the diversification it has long sought". It said its proposed offer for Genel was "not conditional on completion or lapse of the announced offer for Capricorn".

Genel came to the London market in 2011 when the Turkish group Genel Enerji was bought in a reverse takeover by Vallares, an investment vehicle backed by a group of big City names including Tony Hayward, the former BP boss, and Nat Rothschild, the financier. Hayward became Genel chief executive initially but is no longer involved in the company, while Rothschild is still its third biggest shareholder.

International exports from Tawke have been limited by a pipeline dispute in recent years, forcing the companies to sell for lower value on local markets, and production was shut down from February till late June owing to the conflict in the Middle East. This sent Genel to a first-half loss of $15.3 million.

Panmure Liberum said: "The DNO offer makes sense as it would consolidate their position in Kurdistan, and where scale would make sense. We would not be surprised to see DNO make an increased offer, but it does make the takeover process for Capricorn more complicated as it creates uncertainty over whether Genel may still be in play as a bidder."

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THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES

Oxford spin-out has worst day of trading for over a decade

MARKET REPORT

Investors in **Oxford Biomedica** took fright after the cell and gene therapy manufacturer cut its 2026 revenue forecast, citing operational delays at a site and deferred client orders.

By the close in London yesterday, shares in the FTSE 250 company had fallen by 86p, or 14.6 per cent, to 505p, the worst day of trading since June 2013 and valuing the business at £597 million compared with nearly £900 million in January.

Oxford Biomedica had previously warned of a first-half core loss due to planned maintenance shutdowns and costs associated with the integration of its newly acquired facility in Durham, North Carolina.

However, the company, which was spun out of the University of Oxford in 1995 and listed a year later, has now lowered its full-year 2026 revenue forecast by 17 per cent to £180 million to £200 million. It said "changes in client ordering behaviour", including delayed programme timelines and altered procurement pathways of a large client, had affected revenue.

Investors appeared to find little recompense in its full-year 2027 revenue forecasts, when it expects growth of 25 to 30 per cent year-on-year, along with double-digit percentage earnings margins. The company's chief executive, Frank Mathias, said that demand for its services was still strong.

Wall Street report

Indices rallied after official data showed an unexpected drop of 23,000 jobs last month, easing fears of a Federal Reserve rate rise next month. At lunchtime the S&P 500 was up 33.87 points, or 0.4 per cent, at 7,743.83 while the Nasdaq had risen 235.26 points, or 0.9 per cent, to 26,588.77. The Dow Jones industrial average was 98.45 points, or 0.2 per cent, higher at 53,983.55.

The day's biggest movers

Fresnillo	4.6%
Endeavour Mining	4.1%
Diageo	3.2%
St James's Place	2.6%
ConvaTec	2.5%
Shell	-1.1%
Computacenter	-1.2%
Coca-Cola Europacific	-1.4%
Glencore	-1.6%
Burberry Group	-2.6%

It was news from across the Atlantic that had the biggest effect on the rest of the FTSE 100 with the surprise fall in US non-farm payroll numbers.

Official data showed the US economy shed 23,000 jobs in July, a far worse performance than expected.

The implication for US interest rates was clear: investors believe the US Federal Reserve is less likely to raise interest rates in September.

That was good news for precious metals miners, which usually benefit in such circumstances. The price of gold and silver tends to rise when interest rates fall as investors seek safe havens.

Investors did indeed respond accordingly. **Fresnillo** and **Endeavour Mining's** shares were up sharply on the blue-chip index. Fresnillo was 126p, or 4.6 per cent, higher at £28.64, while Endeavour Mining was up 158p or 4.1 per cent at £40.46.

Down on the FTSE 250, another of the quoted precious metals producers, **Hochschild Mining**, saw its shares rise sharply, up 29½p, or 6.2 per cent, to 509½p.

The FTSE 100 closed up 33.2 points, or 0.3 per cent, at 10,901.09 for a weekly gain of 0.3 per cent. The FTSE 250 ended 159.44 points, or 0.7 per cent, higher at 24,854.86, a third consecutive record and up 3.7 per cent over the five days.

Harworth rejects Peel bid

Harworth Group has rejected a £583 million takeover offer from John Whittaker's Peel Group, saying the figure "fundamentally undervalues" the land and property regeneration company. Harworth owns about 15,000 acres across 100 sites in the north of England and the Midlands, with the potential to build industrial space and 29,000 homes. The group has increasingly focused on logistics developments and oversaw the redevelopment of the former Ironbridge power station in Shropshire.

Levi's hit by cyberattack

Levi Strauss disclosed yesterday a recent cybersecurity incident in which an unauthorised third party gained access to the US clothing company's systems through a social engineering attack targeting three employees. It said it had put in place containment measures and opened an investigation, the preliminary findings of which showed that corporate information was accessed. The San Francisco-based denim brand said that it did not expect a material effect on its operations or financial results.

German green light

Shareholders of Thyssenkrupp have approved the proposed spin-off of the group's materials trading division, its largest by sales, in the latest step by the German industrial conglomerate to simplify its sprawling structure. The spin-off of 49 per cent of tk accelis, which employs 15,500 staff and wholesales raw materials such as steel and alloys as well as running warehouses to store them, continues Thyssenkrupp's overhaul after separate listings of its hydrogen and defence divisions.

‘Young people want to work, but it’s up to us to give them opportunities’

Hospitality is regularly dismissed as a stopgap but it offers vital life skills, KFC’s UK boss tells **Jessica Newman**

JASON BYE FOR THE TIMES

Rob Swain dropped out of university to start working in bars and later completed an MBA with the Open University, opening up a career path that led him to KFC

Most of the chief executives I meet in the hospitality world could disappear into the crowd without attracting a second glance. Unlike in the Square Mile where a sharply cut suit and tie can feel like part of the job description, hospitality leaders tend to dress, and often behave, with far less ceremony.

Spotting Rob Swain at Ipswich railway station, a quick double-take confirms that the general manager of KFC UK and Ireland, and my acting chauffeur today, is every bit the unassuming executive I expected.

Swain, dressed in blue jeans, a black polo shirt and trainers, has spent all his working life in hospitality. After leaving school with decent A-levels, he secured a spot at university but after three months decided it wasn’t for him. When he got back home to St Albans in Hertfordshire, it was straight to the job centre.

On the drive to the KFC branch at Martlesham Heath where we plan to have lunch, Swain explains the first role the job centre found him was collecting glasses and cleaning toilets at Batchwood Hall, a local nightclub — a small-world moment, because having grown up nearby, Batchwood was my local teenage haunt.

“There’s no job that I’d ask someone to do that I wouldn’t do myself,” he says. “I wasn’t looking for a career in hospitality but I took that first step on the ladder and thought, wow, you know this is actually really good.”

Nightclubs were a different beast back then, Swain remembers fondly, as we share some colourful stories. “It was just wild.” After 12 years working up and down the country before having a “full-circle” moment when he went back to run Batchwood, the routine 6am finishes — unsurprisingly — grew tiring.

He wanted to do an MBA at the Open University, “but I couldn’t pay for it so I kept bugging Luminar [his employer at the time] for help. The first person to say yes was Peter Marks [the veteran leisure executive].”

“There have been so many people over the years that have supported and created a ladder for me to climb,” Swain says, adding that he remembers the moment during his nightclub days when somebody told him for the first time that he had potential.

At the height of the financial crisis, Swain, armed with a degree, turned to recruiters “who at the time said I’d got no chance”. While he didn’t know exactly what he wanted to do, he knew he wanted to work in operations for a consumer-facing business that had opportunities to move up. KFC was the first thing that popped up.

Having made it into the final stages, he was asked by the company if he would be willing to move to East Anglia. “Naive me thought, ‘This is fine.’ I thought nothing of it.” After six months of training, KFC sent him off to what he learnt was then the company’s most challenging area in the country.

His region, which comprised eight shops, four in Ipswich, was struggling. Still, he loved it. “I came up here, I didn’t know anyone ... I think the team just needed a bit of inspiration, a bit of encouragement,” he says.

We arrive at our destination, which sits beside a busy retail park. Over the course of the afternoon there is a steady stream of mums and children claiming tables, no doubt a payoff for being dragged round the shops.

It’s decided an array of items from the menu will be brought over for us to try. Before we park ourselves at a quiet table, Swain is off, greeting the dozen or so employees on shift.

Of the 35,000 people KFC employs in the UK and Ireland, 65 per cent are below the age of 25 and about 2,000 employees are promoted to leadership positions annually. Despite being elevated to the top job last year, it is clear that Swain has not forgotten the ladder he climbed, nor lost any determination to ensure that others are afforded the same chance.

Our conversation is timely. The UK’s youth unemployment crisis is at a critical juncture, with the number of young people not in education, employment or training (Neets) surpassing one million this year.

“If you step back and read all of the press, there can be this perception that young people don’t want to work hard enough and I don’t think that’s true,” he says. “There’s still a tremendous amount of commitment and resilience and hard work; there’s just not enough opportunity. That’s the bit we have to create.”

He points over to James, KFC’s area coach for East Anglia, who started his career at the company working part-time. “That was not on James’s life career plan, just as it wasn’t on mine. No one at school said to me this was a meaningful career. ”

KFC is in its fourth year of running Hatch, a paid pre-employment programme designed to develop skills and experience. So far, more than 1,000 Neets have gone through the scheme, with 60 per cent progressing into employment, training or education.

It is not hard to see his frustration at how hospitality is often dismissed as a stopgap industry. Swain believes the sector, the country’s third-largest employer, is key to helping solve the youth unemployment crisis. “But it’s got to start with a really good recognition of the positive momentum around hospitality’s ability to create opportunity,” he says.

The industry, he argues, not only contributes £140 billion to the economy but also offers vital life skills to young people entering the workforce. He recalls the difference he saw in his two eldest children after jobs in pubs and restaurants gave them “this ability to confidently talk to people and deal with people who haven’t had a great experience”.

Our food arrives. Along with fries and some of KFC’s signature fried chicken, we are delivered a steaming chicken rice bowl and two limited-edition naan burgers.

Swain says innovating the menu is key to capturing customers. The numbers reinforce consumers’ appetite, with same-store sales up 9 per cent in the second quarter.

Swain credits viral hits like its “pickle mania” menu — a limited offer featuring a pickle burger, pickle-loaded fries, fried pickles and a pickle drink, which drove the highest sales week in the company’s history — for “giving customers more reasons to choose us”.

Our conversation turns to the craze for fried chicken, a market estimated to be worth £3.1 billion that has swept across the country in recent years with new entrants such as Popeyes, Wingstop and Dave’s Hot Chicken.

KFC, however, has been ruling Britain’s high streets since 1965, when it opened its first restaurant in Preston, Lancashire, years before McDonald’s and Domino’s Pizza planted their flags. Now it has 1,050 restaurants, three quarters of which are operated by 27 franchisees.

He admits the competition is as hot as it has ever been, but says more players illustrates the strength of the market. “In a role like mine, if you’re worried by the competition you’re probably in the wrong job and the reason for that is we have competed for the last 60 years and we’re going to compete for the next 60.”

Confident that consumers’ appetite will not wane over the next decade, KFC plans to open another 500 restaurants “in communities where we still think there’s an opportunity to bring the brand”.

Swain also seems calm about the growth of GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic and Mounjaro, believing it is too early to say what the ultimate consumer shift will be. However, he is firm that the company is in good shape to cater to new appetites, pointing to the 600-calorie rice bowl in front of him. “Businesses that are going to win moving forward are the ones that stay really close to what is happening from a consumer’s point of view.”

CV

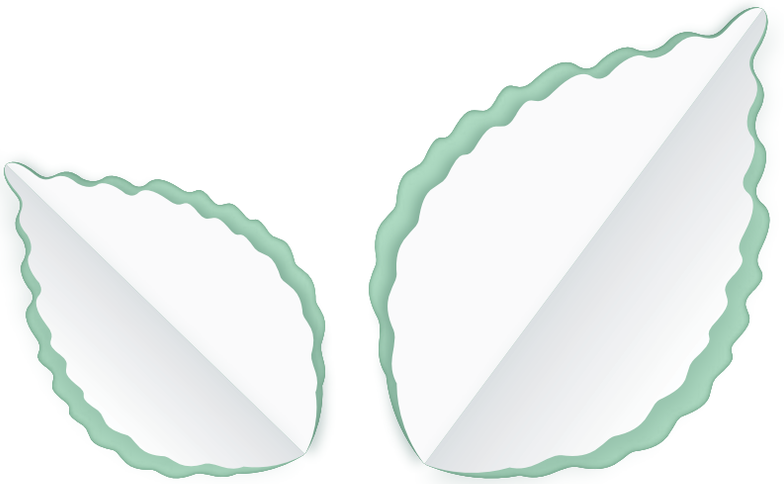
Age: 47
Education: St Columba’s College, St Albans. MBA with the Open University from 2004 to 2008.
Career: Managed bars and nightclubs before joining KFC as area manager in 2009. Held senior roles including chief operating officer for KFC UK and Ireland (2016-22) and global chief operations officer (2022-25) before becoming general manager of KFC UK and Ireland in January 2025.
Family: Married with three children and three dogs.

RECEIPT

2x crispy naan meals with regular fries and a drink	£18.98
Three tenders and dips	£6.49
Rice bowl	£7.99
TOTAL	**£33.46**

KFC Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

THANK YOU!!



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Source: Two Sides Analysis of FAO data, 2005-2020
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Money

It's not 'unearned' wealth, Burnham. Hands off
Ben Wilkinson, page 56

The former high flyers who can't find work
Pages 58-59

Landlord left my frail parents out in cold
Your Money Matters, page 61

Will money really be worth nothing in 10 years?

The world's richest man says there's no need to save because AI is going to change the value of everything. **Imogen Tew** looks at whether he might have a point

Elon Musk — the world's richest man — has long been criticised for his lack of charitable giving. Last week, however, the Tesla boss, the world's first trillionaire, effectively promised to give away much of his vast wealth within ten years.

It came after Daron Acemoglu, a Nobel prizewinning economist, challenged him on the social media platform X: "If money won't matter in 2036, why don't you pledge to donate your current wealth... to charity no later than 2036?"

"I am actually going to do something along these lines," Musk replied.

Acemoglu was referring to Musk's latest prediction that in ten years' time money will no longer matter thanks to the extensive power of artificial intelligence (AI). This is because robots and AI will be able to provide more goods and services than humans could ever need.

It is not the first time Musk has predicted such a future. On the *Moonshots with Peter Diamandis* podcast, he said that saving for retirement would become irrelevant because the abundance of goods would mean that people would have "whatever they want". The idea was branded "delusional" by the US senator Maria Cantwell, but how exactly would this moneyless vision work, what would it look like — and does Musk have a point?

COULD WE ALL BE SUPER-RICH?

In Musk's world, cash as we know it won't exist. Instead, he talks about "a database" that could be changed — effectively, governments could print money by adding to this.

When asked if this would lead to inflation (in standard economics, adding more money into an environment will push up the price of goods and services), Musk argued that the rate of goods and services being created would be higher than the rate of money being created, so we would actually experience deflation, where prices fall in real terms.

So if goods and services were cheap, scarcity no longer existed and we were all being given money freely by the government, could we all own superyachts and live in mansions?

Not exactly. "In Musk's hypothetical — and it is an extremely hypothetical scenario — we wouldn't all suddenly be able to buy luxury goods," said Joe Nellis, a professor of global economy and adviser to the accountancy firm MHA.

"The assets that will have high value will be those fixed assets such as housing, land, natural resources. Where there is a limit to a resource, those with the deepest pockets will still be the ones able to pay for it."

So we might all be able to afford superyachts, but the mooring space might price us out of the market.

But what does this all mean for you and your retirement fund? Amid the backlash to Musk's statement about pension savings being "irrelevant", Pete Ricketts, the Republican senator for Nebraska, said: "I would recommend that Americans still plan for retirement, and use their retirement accounts to do so."

Muj Choudhury, who has worked in AI software for a decade, said: "You can have AI and automation and lower the cost of doing things, but you can't undo industries — like banking and investing — that have been incumbent for thousands of years.

"What he is missing is the human element to this. We are made in a particular way, competitive as a species and driven and motivated."

Nellis said: "Unless we can imagine an extreme version of Marxism where all value is distributed, there will always be a need for some form of money. Without, it would be the end of the market economy — and I think Musk is the last person who would be predicting the end of the market economy."

Musk's predictions for a changing world do not have the best track record. In October 2015 he said that Tesla would have full autonomy within three years. In 2019 he was confident that Tesla would have approval for robotaxis "next year", and said that by 2022 owning a car other than a Tesla would be like "owning a horse".

And if Musk had been right about space travel, we would have sent humans to the moon two years ago. Instead, no human has been there since 1972, and his prediction that there would be a self-sustaining city of a million people on Mars by 2050 seems increasingly unlikely.

OR WOULD WE ALL JUST GET FREE MONEY?

There is one element of Musk's prediction that feels more realistic. When pushed about those who will lose their jobs to AI, Musk had an answer: "I think the Treasury should just simply issue people cheques," he told The Economist.

The concept of a universal income, where everyone gets a regular, unconditional payment regardless of work, wealth or circumstances, is not a new one. It even has the support of our new prime minister, Andy Burnham, who as mayor of Manchester said that a universal basic income would put a "solid foundation beneath everybody" so they could have a "life with security".

While a universal basic income has typically been supported by the left, it is now championed by tech experts and AI chiefs as the answer to how we will survive as AI rapidly replaces jobs.

The big question is how it would be funded. Musk does not provide a solution, but suggests that government funding as we know it probably would not exist — or be necessary — in the world he envisages.

Other tech titans have more concrete ideas. For example, Sam Altman, the boss of OpenAI, the AI giant responsible for ChatGPT, once suggested an equity fund where AI companies and other beneficiaries of AI could contribute a portion of their value each year which was then distributed to all citizens.

Alternative ways of paying for a universal income could include publicly owned stakes in AI companies or taxes on profits.

IS BURNHAM ON BOARD?

Advocates of a universal basic income are hopeful that the new prime minister could help it to become a reality, at least on a local level.

"His whole 'Manchesterism' pitch is about devolution and giving city regions the tools to tackle poverty directly, and a locally led, basic income pilot fits that story very well," said Will Stronge from the research organisation Autonomy, which focuses on tackling climate change, the future of work and economic planning.

In February 2025 Burnham backed a pilot scheme from the Universal Basic Income Lab in Manchester and the Common Sense Policy Group at Northumbria University which suggested giving 200 participants £1,600 a month for two years.

The aim was to target young people experiencing homelessness or who were at risk of homelessness. Burnham has made ending homelessness his first pledge as prime minister.

> "What he is missing is the human element. We are a competitive species

Louis Strappazzon from the Universal Basic Income Lab said: "I think with Burnham we're more likely to see alternative policies being considered and better co-operation between central government and local government, which makes a basic income more likely."

While Burnham and Musk are unlikely bedfellows in supporting the same policy, their visions are very different. Musk's requires little strategy: in his world abundance from AI simply arrives, making a universal income cheap in a world where robots can provide more than we need. Burnham's, on the other hand, would require huge funding and widespread backing in parliament and beyond.

In response to Musk's prediction that money will cease to matter, the venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, the cofounder of the computer firm Sun Microsystems, said such abundance would occur "only if the politics permits". The same could be said of Burnham's vision.

Money

Burnham must resist his urge to confiscate your 'unearned' wealth

Ben Wilkinson
Head of Money

It's apparently an easy argument to make. Money made on investment growth should be taxed at the same rate as income earned through work. After all, one is paid in exchange for toil, while the other can be money generated without lifting a finger.

It's an argument that Andy Burnham and his chancellor John Healey will be sympathetic to, and is likely to be something that they are considering for their first budget on October 28.

Tempting it may well be, but going after "unearned" wealth would be a folly, and an unjust one at that. That's because raising taxes does not automatically lead to increased revenues. Tax tweaks lead to behavioural changes, some of which aren't necessarily predictable, and some of which should be entirely foreseeable. This is one of them.

Capital gains tax is due on assets that increase in value — a second home for instance, or shares held outside an Isa. Basic-rate income taxpayers are charged 18 per cent and higher and additional-rate taxpayers 24 per cent. This compares with income tax rates of 20 per cent, 40 per cent and 45 per cent.

Burnham's "inspiration", the former Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, last month urged him to raise capital gains tax to match income tax. He was reported to have said that this would be the "fair" thing to do. Yet, I'd argue there's nothing fair about it, and that it has the potential to backfire badly and end up costing working taxpayers more.

Analysis of HM Revenue & Customs data by the investment firm IG suggests that such a change could cost the Treasury nearly £8 billion a year. However, cabinet members Wes Streeting and Louise Haigh have backed an increase to capital gains tax. The chancellor has also consistently voted in favour of increases to the rate.

Capital gains tax is only paid when someone decides to sell an asset. If they think the rate is too high, they won't sell. This, in turn, hits the Treasury in the pocket. The tax rate has to be considered reasonable — it's the same reason that lowering such a rate can lead to an increase in revenue.

Raising the tax also increases the risk of capital flight. Why would a successful business founder hang around if they can keep far more of their money elsewhere if they ever decide to sell? It can also deter investment in business and entrepreneurship, something that we are very much in need of.

It has also conveniently been overlooked that the capital gains tax burden has grown heavily over the past two decades or so.

The way capital gains tax was calculated used to take rising price into account, meaning that those selling an asset would not have to pay tax on any inflationary gains. Gordon Brown, when he was Labour chancellor, froze the rate of this tax relief in 1998 before Alistair Darling got rid of it entirely a decade later. The Tories later cut the capital gains tax allowance down from £12,300 to £3,000 a year. Then Rachel Reeves increased the rates in her 2024 budget.

This all means that the tax bill for a £100,000 gain is about £7,000 more than it would have been if the asset was sold in 2010.

Allowances have been cut and inflation has been allowed to tear chunks out of the value of any profits that investors make. All this has been done with little or no warning from ministers. It's hardly a fair way to treat investors making long-term decisions.

Do we really want to confiscate investment rewards that are by no means guaranteed, unlike income through work? Money that is invested has typically been earned, and income tax paid on it. Capital gains tax is a secondary levy, the taxman's slice of your success.

> "Tax tweaks lead to behavioural changes and so have the potential to backfire

Why should a smart investment decision be taxed heavily while winnings from a bet on the horses are entirely tax-free? It makes no sense and sends the wrong message to taxpayers, who we need to spend and invest to keep our economy alive.

This next budget will be even more important than the last two. Burnham has to prove that sensible economics has returned to the Treasury. If he truly wants growth, he will have to suppress his instinct to tax wealth so that he can ensure that investment and business can prosper.

ben.wilkinson@thetimes.co.uk

NS&I wrongly told grieving family they would get £30k

Hodan Sultan

A bereaved family were told that they had inherited £30,000 of Premium Bonds after a blunder by National Savings and Investments (NS&I).

One relative had been relying on the money to pay for his loved one's funeral before the government-backed bank revealed the error. He raised a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service and asked for about £15,000 compensation for the mix-up but was awarded a few hundred pounds.

NS&I had sent the man, revealed by the ombudsman only as Mr B, a letter to inform him that his relative, Ms B, had £30,000 held in Premium Bonds. In reality Ms B had withdrawn her funds several years before.

NS&I, which also told Mr B that he had to get a grant of probate before he could get the money, later admitted that it had given him the details of another customer's holdings by mistake.

Mr B had raised concerns of a possible data breach, given the mix-up there had been between Ms B's details and those of another customer with NS&I. Katy Kidd, the ombudsman who looked at the case, said that Mr B and his family had been "affected emotionally by the events" but that the service could only award compensation, plus interest, for the grant of probate, he had been told to get, which had cost £300.

£476m
The savings that NS&I may have failed to pay out to bereaved families

In March the chief executive of NS&I, Dax Harkins, stepped down after it emerged that administration errors had meant that millions of pounds had not been paid into the accounts of 37,500 bereaved families. The total that was not paid out is estimated to be as much as £476 millioin. The bank has hired 100 extra staff to deal with the problem and to help bereaved families.

NS&I said: "We sincerely apologise that on this occasion we have not provided the customer service that people should expect from NS&I, particularly at such a sensitive time."

'Higher tax could save the self-employed'

Aaliyah Ahmed

The top rate of income tax should go up to 52 per cent to help support the self-employed, a think tank has said.

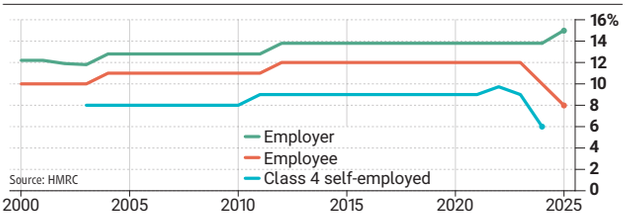
The right-leaning research organisation Bright Blue wants self-employed workers to be automatically enrolled in pension schemes and to be paid for parental leave — but said they should pay more tax to fund it.

It suggested a revamp of national insurance, including scrapping employer contributions and making the self-employed pay the same rate as employees. To plug the gap in Treasury revenue, it proposed raising the basic rate of income tax from 20 per cent to 31 per cent, the higher rate from 40 per cent to 48 per cent and the additional rate from 45 per cent to 52 per cent. It also suggested a new rate of 13 per cent for earnings between £5,000 and £12,570.

Bright Blue said the changes could give the self-employed access to more support, such as universal credit, parental leave, sick pay and state-backed pension contributions.

There has been speculation about possible tax changes in the budget on October 28, with ministers under pressure to balance the books while supporting growth. Successive governments have tinkered with national insurance — Jeremy Hunt cut rates in March 2024 and said he wanted to eventually abolish the system. Rachel Reeves put up the rate of employer contributions from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent.

National insurance rates



Andy Burnham has suggested that the top rate of income tax could go up to 50 per cent as part of a package to raise more money for public services.

Bartek Staniszewski, the head of policy at Bright Blue, said: "The self-employed are more insecure than ever ... and they think that the system is squarely against them.

"Clearly, a new deal for the self-employed is necessary. Better protections for the self-employed and fair tax treatment for all would be welcomed by the self-employed while raising billions for HM Revenue & Customs or putting billions back in the pockets of employees."

About five million people are self-employed in the UK, representing about 13 per cent of the workforce. The median net pay for a full-time self-employed worker was £22,800 in 2024-25, compared with £29,000 for a full-time employee.

Self-employed workers pay lower national insurance contributions than employees. A self-employed worker earning £39,000 pays about £1,587 in national insurance contributions, compared with a total of about £7,214 paid by an employee on the same salary and their employer, creating a gap of about £10 billion compared with a system where both groups paid equivalent rates.

However, the self-employed do not qualify for some employment benefits, including statutory sick pay. The government's Pensions Commission found that just 4 per cent of self-employed workers were saving for retirement.

‘I’ve been happily married for five years — but I still want a postnup’

Those who work less after children should get their financial sacrifice recognised, says **Alice Ter Haar**

Marriage is arguably the biggest financial contract most of us will ever sign, but we largely overlook what happens in the case of something other than “till death us do part”.

I’m 39 and the first wave of divorces are starting to divide our friends. It made me think about the precarious position I would be in if the same thing happened to me and my husband. It’s why I brought up the idea of a postnuptial agreement during a recent child-free, three-hour drive, ironically to a wedding.

You might have heard of a prenup, which is signed before marriage. It records how a couple want their money, property and other assets, such as businesses, to be dealt with if the marriage ends. A postnup is the same thing, but signed retrospectively.

A friend had recently signed one. My husband, Harry, was a bit bemused at the suggestion, but he’s a pragmatist. We have been married for five years. We’re both entrepreneurs — he’s run his architectural lighting business since university, and I have a corporate training company. We have two young daughters and, for the record, our relationship is in good shape.

Like most, we never even considered a prenup. Even though some 42 per cent of us think nuptial agreements are a good idea, fewer than one in five young married adults actually sign one. This is partly because because they’re not legally binding — although the government is consulting on making them more so in England and Wales.

When getting married, few of us really realise what we’re formally signing up to. We might share a surname (we don’t), children, a mortgage. But did anyone actively investigate how being married would affect their legal status? It’s not as if you get a booklet at the register office explaining the terms. Unlike with your mortgage, or credit card. A loved one getting divorced said recently: “It’s so easy to get married and so difficult to get divorced.”

My own attitudes started to change after having children. After our daughters were born, I became their primary care giver. I run my business, Badass Unicorn, for 25 hours a week to be around for them while Harry works full time. Embarking on this process forced us to ask ourselves how we wanted to raise them. I could earn more if I worked more, but then we’d need a nanny or have to rely heavily on wraparound care.

This has had repercussions on my long-term earning potential. Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that five years after having her first baby, a woman earns an average of 42 per cent less (£1,051) each month than she did before the birth. Her partner’s trajectory? Broadly unchanged.

As I explained to my husband: “Before we had children, professionally we were equals. After our two daughters were born, we were not. Imagine having this conversation with the girls in 25 years. What would you think then?”

> I could earn more if I worked more, but we’d need a nanny or wraparound care

The conversation was difficult. Confronting. At points heated. But I’d give us an 8/10 for maturity. I mean, apart from the bit when I screeched: “So, shall I send you an invoice for all my unpaid labour.” And he snarled incredulously: “You seriously want 50 per cent of my company?” After which I retorted, if only quite so pithily: “Well, yeah — if you want 50 per cent of your kids.”

Yet I believe that having this conversation is one of the most romantic things we’ve ever done. The aim was to bring us closer together, make us more of a unit, by stating our expectations, and defining the different, and equal, contributions we’re committing to.

We arrived at the wedding feeling more connected, with the quiet confidence that comes from knowing you can do hard things. And with the decision to draw up a letter of intent — a legal note to outline the main terms of a future postnup agreement. I feel reassured now that I have a better understanding of my legal position if things go south. And hopeful that having this discussion before we needed it will mean we are less likely to need it at all.

42%

The average monthly drop in salary for a woman five years after having her first child

@CHEBIRCHHAYES

Alice Ter Haar and her husband, Harry, on their wedding day

Why a fake parking fine could cost you a mortgage

Jack Simpson

When Eren Mehmet, 28, was sent his first parking ticket in 2022 for a car park he had never visited, he was confused. Another 15 demands followed for unpaid tickets and London congestion charge notices.

Mehmet insists the tickets were racked up by fraudsters who cloned his number plate and used it on their vehicle. He said he defended nearly all of them by proving that the vehicle wasn’t his, but unknown to him, one ticket remained unpaid. Mehmet, who works in recruitment, had been living with his parents but the family moved and he didn’t see the letters that were sent to their old address. In 2023 a county court judgment was made against him in his absence. He tried to appeal but it stayed on his record.

Mehmet, from north London, was married in April 2024. The parking fine ruled him and his wife out of two flats they wanted to buy. He said: “It was tough. We wanted to move in somewhere after we got married. For four or five months before the wedding, I was running around to make sure we had a home.”

Having been turned down for a mortgage by Legal and General, the couple went through the specialist broker When the Bank Says No and were able to buy a flat in Hendon. The broker specialises in finding mortgage deals for homebuyers with bad credit, irregular income, or facing other financial challenges.

Banks and mortgage brokers say it is becoming more common for mortgage applications to be turned down because of unpaid debts. Parking fines are the most common type. Analysis by the RAC motoring group found that in the nine months to the end of September 2025, parking companies issued over 13 million fines, compared with 14.4 million in the whole of 2025. It estimates that the total for 2025 could be 17 million.

Jamie Elvin from the broker Strive Mortgages said: “We’re coming across situations where a relatively minor unpaid parking ticket is causing an expensive mortgage problem. Once an unpaid parking fine or bill turns into a default judgment or county court judgment, lenders just see adverse credit. That can mean fewer lenders, higher rates, or a refusal.”

Private companies, banks or individuals can apply to have a county court judgment issued if they believe money is owed for credit cards, utility bills, personal loans, council tax or motoring charges. These usually stay on your credit file for six years. Many high street banks do not lend at all if someone has had a county court judgment in the past three years. Some will accept you with conditions, for example, if the judgment was for an amount below £500 or if it occurred more than a year ago.

Eren Mehmet believed his number plate was cloned

Having debt on your record can leave you with fewer options when it comes to getting a mortgage, and less competitive rates.

Aaron Strutt from the broker Trinity Financial said: “Missed payments often transfer automatically to credit reference agencies, and red marks are put on credit files quickly. Having a county court judgment is often disastrous when it comes to qualifying for a cheap mortgage rate.”

Mehmet had an offer accepted for a shared ownership new-build flat in Barnet in 2023 but it fell through after the lender found out about his court judgment. “We had to use the developers’ specific lenders, and when they did their checks it was a no because of how recent the county court judgment was,” he said. “I’m paid well, so there wasn’t any issue of being able to afford the property, which is frustrating.”

After his application for a second property was rejected for the same reason, he turned in November 2023 to When the Bank Says No and within days the couple had a five-year 6.64 per cent fixed-rate mortgage with One Bank to buy a one-bedroom flat. At that time, the average five-year rate was 5.86 per cent, according to the data firm Moneyfacts.

Emma Jones, the founder of When the Bank Says No, said it had a case involving a heart surgeon who had 12 tickets for parking at the hospital where he worked. He challenged them, but was hit with 12 county court judgments, not realising the impact this would have on his borrowing until several high street banks turned him down.

She said the best thing to do if you get a fine when buying a home would be to pay it off and avoid the risk. “People might say you could just wait it out, but if you have a baby on the way and you need a bigger house, you have no choice, have you?”

Money

Overqualified: the former high-flyers who can't find work

Women in their forties and fifties are finding that their years of experience can be a hindrance in today's job market, says **Emily Hall**

When the former fashion editor Stacey Duguid decided to go public with the fact that at 52 she can't get a job, despite applying for hundreds of positions, she had a huge response.

Since her confession on Instagram in June, she has had thousands of messages from women aged 40 to 65 with similar stories. After a lifetime of hard work, they now find themselves sidelined by a job market that appears to prioritise youth over experience.

This sentiment is echoed across forums and Facebook groups, with many saying that it feels harder than ever to land a new job in midlife.

Charlotte Davies from the careers site LinkedIn said: "Economic uncertainty means that hiring is down. For women in their forties and fifties, who may also be juggling caring responsibilities, the challenge can feel even greater — at exactly the point in their careers when they have the most experience to offer."

We spoke to four older job hunters to see what it is really like.

36%
The share of 50 to 69-year-olds who feel at a disadvantage applying for work, according to the Centre for Ageing Better

'I'VE WORKED AT BIG FIRMS BUT NOW I'M INVISIBLE'

Steph Walsh spent 22 years building a career but last year was forced to move out of London because she couldn't afford her rent. She has been left questioning her worth after being made redundant four times between the ages of 38 and 46, despite having worked in IT for some of the UK's biggest banks and organisations.

Her last role was as chief of staff to the chief revenue officer at a tech start-up where she was paid £120,000, but after feeling "sidelined" and working under a man 16 years her junior, she was again made redundant.

Walsh, who will be 50 in September, said breaking back into the workplace in her late forties has been nothing short of impossible.

"I sent 673 applications in just over six months and rarely heard back, and when I say 'heard back' I mean I got an auto-rejection," she said. "I have worked at plenty of high-profile companies, but I seem to be invisible now.

"It's partly down to the death of transferable skills. My CV is pretty varied but I feel like it's being read by an AI robot and I don't have enough of a percentage of one thing to get through to the next stage.

"This new AI world is built for those who have had one career and have never strayed from that career."

Walsh was left with no choice but

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High-flyers who find themselves grounded: Steph Walsh, Catherine Williams, Jamie Klingler and Liz Giles

> I'm not lazy, I have worked all my life. I try not to get disheartened but I find this soul-destroying
>
> **Jamie Klingler, 47**

to relocate last year from her £4,000-a-month flat in London to one at half the cost in Rye, East Sussex. Finding it impossible to land a job, she taught herself video animation and now pieces together income through part-time work, animation commissions and a small candle business.

She has used up all her savings and friends and family have generously helped her to stay afloat with loans and gifts. She is now writing a book, *The Con of Redundancy: How Work Really Works and What It's Costing Us*, about what she calls the fallacy of midlife reinvention.

"I speak three languages and have two degrees," Walsh said. "I spent £5k on career counselling, which didn't help me at all, and that's because there was nothing wrong with my CV. I reject the narrative of midlife reinvention; there should be no need for it at all."

'I'VE WALKED INTO JOBS MY WHOLE LIFE'

Catherine Williams, 59, from Bicester in Oxfordshire, was a chief operating officer at a social media agency, then took a short time out to care for her elderly mother. She thought she would walk into another role, but that didn't prove anything like as easy as she expected. "It wasn't like I was a dinosaur," she said. "I started using AI in my work eight years ago and my last role was in social media. When I started searching I was hopeful. I've been able to just walk into jobs my whole life."

Williams estimates that she has sent out 180 job applications since April. About 120 were met with total silence, she had 50 rejections, two screen tests after which she heard no more and just two ended in an interview. This is despite the fact that she has worked in senior roles as a business analyst and chief operating officer for most of her four-decade career.

Worryingly for Williams, her husband, Russ, 58, was also made redundant around the same time and is still job-hunting. They built their own house and still have to find just shy of £3,000 a month to pay the mortgage, which won't be paid off until they hit retirement age.

Their need for an income has become more critical because the redundancy money is running out and they will soon have to start eating away at their savings.

Williams has tweaked her CV to remove any dates, and doesn't refer to 15 years of her experience or her education which she is worried may act as a barrier. "Employers are asking for degrees in business analysis, which weren't around when I took my degree between 1986 and 1989," she said. "It's in art history and often has no relevance to what I am applying for.

"I've just erased years of my work history altogether. It's upsetting because I'm proud of my career and it's horrible to have to cut it down."

'I'VE USED UP ALL MY SAVINGS'

Many women who have found themselves out of the workplace are having to budget for the first time in their lives. Liz Giles, 49, has burnt through £6,000 of savings.

She lost her £85,000 job as a communications and policy director at the end of last year and recently started claiming jobseeker's allowance of £95.55 a week. Having applied for 30 jobs, she said that going "on the dole" was hard to swallow.

"I wasn't going to claim it, it's a pride thing, but after three months my friends were saying to me, 'Liz, jobseeker's allowance isn't much but at least it's something.' It doesn't feel great."

Giles, from Loughton, Essex, has a fantastic CV and like many women in her position is struggling to see where, or even if, she's going wrong. She started her career as an ITN broadcast journalist before moving over to the Home Office press office, then working at the Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Justice and two leading law firms.

She has had seven interviews but said she can't seem to land jobs that she is perfectly qualified for.

Recently she was told that she narrowly missed out on a job, only to then see it advertised with a lower salary. Another time, one of the recruiters told her they had been inundated with applications, some of whom were more qualified than the boss of the department.

She said: "I don't know where I'm going wrong. I write my own cover letters, I adapt my CV for each job. Am I too confident? Too articulate? I'm unsure how I can break through this wall."

The financial toll has been brutal. "We are just surviving on my husband's salary. I've used all my savings and have run up a few thousand pounds on my credit card. I worry about my pension, too, because who knows what the cost of living will be when I retire."

Davies said: "The reality is that the job market is tough right now." Her advice is to lean on your network, as well as your experience, and show a clear willingness to keep learning. She recommends learning how to use AI tools, making transferable skills stand out and being specific about the impact you have made, not just the roles you've held.

"The good news is that employers are looking for many of the strengths these women have built throughout their careers: leadership, communication, collaboration and sound judgment. As AI transforms the workplace, these human skills are becoming more valuable, not less.

"Above all, don't undersell yourself," she said. "Women with 20 or 30 years of experience bring perspective, resilience and expertise that businesses need. We need far more of them progressing into senior leadership, not stepping away from the workforce."

'THE GUY IN THE JOBCENTRE HAD SEEN ME ON SKY NEWS'

"Soul-destroying" is how Jamie Klingler, 47, described going to the jobcentre to sign on.

Her CV reads like a dream, but she has spent a year looking for a job. Financially, things have become so fraught she is now on universal credit.

"Once when I went to the jobcentre, the guy had seen me on Sky News," she said. "The staff there are very respectful and they try to help. I'm not lazy, I've worked all my life. I'm trying not to get disheartened but I find the whole thing soul-destroying."

Research by the Centre for Ageing Better, a charity, suggests that 36 per cent of 50 to 69-year-olds feel at a disadvantage when applying for work.

Klingler, from Camden, north London, started out working for the photo agency Corbis in her twenties in its now defunct celebrity portraiture department.

She left to join ShortList magazine as photography director before ending up as head of publishing for both ShortList and Stylist.

Leaving in 2017, she set up her own events and marketing agency, creating National Burger Day and the London Seafood Festival. But the agency struggled when everything shut down during the pandemic.

With little else to occupy her Klingler helped to launch Reclaim These Streets, a campaign group formed in response to the murder of Sarah Everard by an off-duty Metropolitan Police constable. in March 2021.

She was named ninth in PR Week's UK list of top communicators that year, has given Ted talks and her last job was chief of communications for a group of digital marketing agencies, where her salary was £80,000. But her role was cut and she has been unemployed ever since.

At the start of the pandemic she had savings of just under £30,000 and was hoping to buy her own flat. That nest egg is gone. She estimates that she needs £2,500 a month to cover her outgoings and has cut costs where she can — buying clothes on Vinted and leading "a much, much smaller life".

Previously she bought whatever she fancied and travelled extensively, never really worrying about the cost.

Klingler said she'd now take a role for £55,000 as her bills pile up.

"I just cannot get a job," she said.

Cash Isa shake-up will backfire, warns Hargreaves Lansdown

Smarter with Money

Aaliyah Ahmed

Britain's largest investment platform has warned that the government's Isa reforms — designed to get us investing in the stock market — could have the opposite effect.

Hargreaves Lansdown, which has more than two million customers, said that restricting the amount under 65s can save in a cash Isa risked removing the first step that many take before taking the investment plunge.

The change, which will cut the annual cash allowance from £20,000 to £12,000, is due to kick in from April. The stocks and shares Isa allowance will remain at £20,000, which, the government has argued, will encourage more savers to invest rather than holding large sums in cash.

But Hargreaves Lansdown said that cash Isas can be a gateway into investing, with one in five who open a cash Isa with the platform going on to open an investment account within six months. Alice Haine from the platform said: "We completely support the government's ambition to get more people investing, but aren't convinced that these proposals will have that outcome.

"The Isa has worked for decades precisely because it is simple and trusted, and these changes risk adding complexity that could make savers more hesitant, not less."

She said that long-term financial decisions are made based on the expectation that rules will remain stable, and that repeated changes could unsettle those savers the government is trying to encourage into investing.

The Times Smarter with Money campaign is aiming to help to turn Britain into a nation of investors and to increase the number investing in stocks and shares Isas to five million a year. We say that greater financial education and confidence are needed to help more move from saving to investing, rather than just a change of products. The government, also trying to encourage more savers to invest, launched its own campaign this year, featuring the Savvy the Squirrel mascot.

Simon Harrington from the Personal Investment Management & Financial Advice Association, a trade body, said: "Savers are not going to automatically turn into investors as a result of a cap on cash subscriptions," he said. "Those reticent to invest will simply leave their money in current accounts or use Premium Bonds."

The association said the government should focus on measures such as targeted support to help more savers to understand investing, instead of changing the structure of a product used by millions.

Rachael Griffin from the wealth manager Quilter said: "On paper, nudging people away from cash makes sense, but in reality, cash Isas are deeply ingrained in saving habits. The carve-out for over-65s adds another layer of complexity. Isas were meant to be simple and flexible. Having different allowances for cash and investments, with age-based exceptions, undermines that simplicity."

The Treasury said: "We are reforming the cash Isa to encourage more people to invest in stocks and shares — which have historically performed better than cash savings — and we have retained the generous £20,000 tax-free limit.

"These changes will make people better off and will not require anyone to move savings from their cash Isa. Most savers will continue to pay no tax on their savings and the Treasury and HM Revenue & Customs are working with industry on the detailed rules."

Money

Investment Eye

You can't afford to be patriotic with your pension

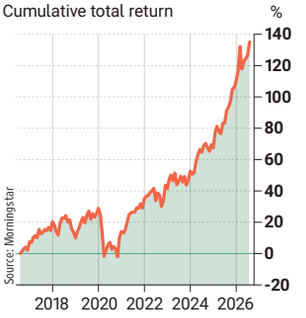
Robin Powell offers insights into the world of investing

At the supermarket British strawberries get the nod. You pay a little more at the local butcher and you cheer yourself hoarse when a British athlete reaches a final. None of it requires a spreadsheet. A pension does.

A pension is a lifeboat, not a flagpole. Its purpose is simple: to help to provide a secure retirement for the people whose money it invests. That's why anyone with a workplace pension should pay close attention to government efforts to steer more pension money towards Britain.

Ministers want more of it invested not just in listed companies but in infrastructure, housing, clean energy and fast-growing private businesses. They argue that the economy needs more patient capital and that pension schemes, with their long investment horizons, are well placed to provide it.

FTSE 100



Their concern is understandable. In a speech to the British Chambers of Commerce in June the former Bank of England chief economist Andy Haldane said UK pension funds had gone from investing more than half their assets in UK shares in 2000 to less than 5 per cent today. Pension funds in other developed countries allocate far more to domestic markets.

They have a point. If those investments offer attractive long-term returns, pension funds should buy them. The real question is not whether Britain deserves more investment but who should decide whether your pension provides it. The answer should lie with those running pension schemes, not ministers. Their job is not to help governments to deliver growth, create jobs or support industrial policy. It is to act in the interests of pension members. If the UK offers opportunities, they should invest. If it doesn't, political pressure should not change their minds.

5%

The share of UK pension funds' assets that are invested in UK shares — down from more than 50% in 2000

That distinction matters, because ministers and pension schemes have different aims. Ministers want faster growth, more jobs and thriving British businesses. Those running pension schemes have a narrower duty: to act in members' best interests while managing risk properly. The two may sometimes align. But they are not the same, and one should never override the other. None of this means that ministers are wrong to want more investment in Britain. But if the country needs more long-term capital the answer is to createopportunities that pension funds are keen to back.

Successful firms, productive infrastructure and well-designed projects should attract capital on their merits. Those running pension schemes should never have to choose between serving members and serving the government. If politicians influence investment decisions, then pension savers bear the risk. Pressure to invest more in Britain could direct money towards projects that pension managers would not otherwise choose, pushing up prices and reducing future returns.

Britain may benefit from more investment, but if you have a defined contribution pension (the most common type these days, where what you get in retirement depends on investment and how much is paid in) and those investments disappoint, it is your pension pot that pays the price.

There is another reason to be wary of UK-loading your pension. Many savers are heavily tied to the economy through jobs, homes or businesses. Investing overseas can reduce dependence on the fortunes of a single country. Increasing the British share of an already diversified pension can do the opposite.

That does not mean pension funds should avoid Britain. An allocation to British companies and other UK investments can make perfect sense. But it should reflect the opportunities available, not political pressure or patriotic sentiment. The further a portfolio tilts towards Britain the stronger the investment case should be. There are plenty of ways to show your support for Britain. Buy British produce. Support local businesses. Cheer British athletes. Governments exist to advance the national interest. Those running pension schemes have a different duty: to their members. Patriotism is a virtue. It is not an investment strategy.

Robin Powell is a journalist and campaigner for change in investing

What the wealthy now see as their greatest threat

Research shows that millionaires are expecting to be asked to pay more tax over the next year — and fear the effects of government policy more than global unrest, finds **Aaliyah Ahmed**

Millionaires now see the government and higher taxes as the biggest threat to their wealth — ahead of inflation, market turmoil and even global political instability.

Research among the most wealthy in Britain last month found that nearly half believed higher taxes posed the greatest risk to their fortunes, while more than a quarter pointed to government policy.

By comparison, just 9 per cent cited geopolitical events, while only about 3 per cent were worried about inflation or market volatility and 6 per cent feared weak economic growth.

The findings come after the government confirmed last week that the first budget from the new chancellor, John Healey, will be on October 28, setting the stage for months of speculation over potential tax changes. The announcement fuelled uncertainty among investors, after previous budgets included changes to the rules on capital gains tax and plans to include pensions within the inheritance tax net from 2027. Like the previous chancellor, Healey is facing a challenge to balance the public finances and also stimulate growth.

The survey of 341 clients of the investment service Wealth Club, each with a net worth of at least £1 million, found widespread expectations of further tax increases. Almost every respondent believed that taxes would definitely or probably rise over the next year.

Inheritance tax topped the list of concerns, with 22 per cent fearing changes, while 21 per cent were worried about the introduction of a wealth tax. Some 18 per cent said they were most concerned about increases to capital gains tax.

Despite their concerns over government policy, wealthy investors appeared relatively upbeat about Britain's stock market. More than a third believed UK shares were undervalued and offered attractive long-term opportunities, while 36 per cent thought they were fairly valued.

However, confidence in the wider economy remains weak. Seven out of ten respondents said they were either "not very confident" or "not confident at all" about the UK's economic outlook over the next 12 months. Nearly six out of ten expected the Bank of England to raise interest rates during that period, while almost two thirds believed inflation will increase.

Alex Davies, the founder and chief executive of Wealth Club, said: "It is deeply worrying that millionaires now see tax and government policy as a bigger threat to their wealth than inflation, market volatility or geopolitical events.

"That is an extraordinary finding and suggests that confidence in the UK's economic direction is already at a very low ebb.

"Governments inevitably face difficult choices and must balance the public finances. However, every increase in the tax burden and every policy change that makes Britain a less attractive place to save, invest and build businesses risks further undermining confidence."

Last month more than 100 millionaires, including the former England captain Gary Lineker, wrote to Andy Burnham urging him to increase taxes on the super rich. Members of the Patriotic Millionaires UK group also include the screenwriter Richard Curtis and former trader Gary Stevenson.

Patriotic millionaires: Richard Curtis, Gary Lineker and Gary Stevenson

Financial advisers told Times Money that wealthy families were already reviewing long-term financial plans rather than waiting to see what was announced at the budget. Graham Nicoll at NCL Wealth Partners said: "For many high-net-worth clients, the biggest threat is now policy uncertainty rather than market volatility.

"They fear changes to inheritance tax, capital gains tax and the treatment of pensions or business assets could undermine plans built over decades."

Nicoll said some families had begun accelerating wealth transfers, using trusts and gifts, while reviewing how business assets were structured to improve long-term tax efficiency.

Nouran Moustafa, the founder of the financial advisory firm Roxton Wealth, said that clients were less concerned about tax than dealing with constantly changing rules.

"High-net-worth clients do not fear paying tax; they fear planning under one rulebook and retiring under another," she said.

"The biggest mistake is panic planning. Giving away too much too early, crystallising gains unnecessarily or buying unsuitable high-risk investments can cost more than the tax saved."

Harvey Dhillon, the chief executive of the accountancy firm Zmartly, said inheritance tax had become a particular concern for entrepreneurs whose wealth was tied up in their businesses.

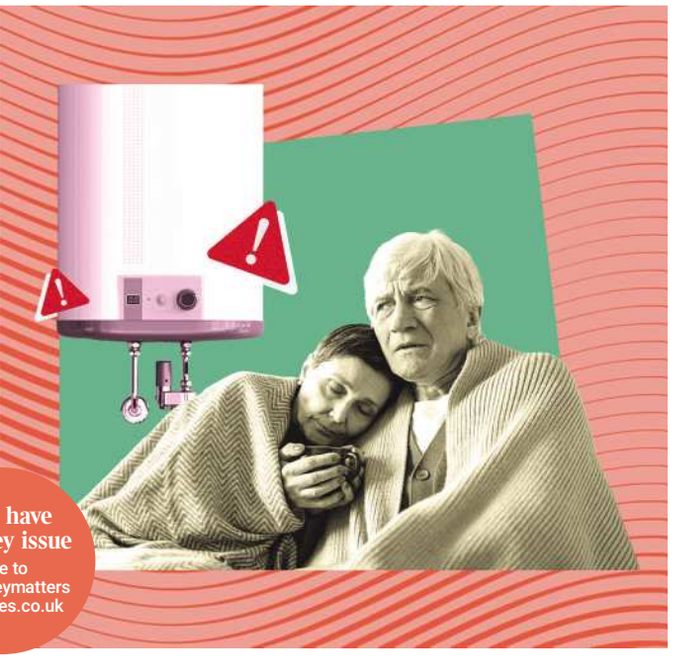
"My clients with £1 million or more are rich on paper but this is in stock, a warehouse and shares in their own company."

He said that many were seeking formal company valuations, removing surplus assets and giving away assets earlier.

Your Money Matters Holly Thomas

‘Landlord left my frail parents with no heating or hot water in depth of winter’

Our consumer champion gets to grips with your problems



If you have a money issue write to yourmoneymatters@thetimes.co.uk

My parents rent a property that is managed by the estate agency Savills. On January 17 the combination boiler failed, resulting in no heating or hot water. My parents contacted Savills immediately but the boiler wasn’t replaced until March 6. They were told that the initial quote had been too expensive and alternative quotes were taking time. Eventually a quote was accepted but the boiler would need to come from Ireland. My parents are frail and in their eighties but, being of that generation, are stoic and waited patiently. Savills did provide two electric heaters but did nothing to address the lack of hot water.

We have been in discussion with Savills for the past four months over compensation for the fact that my parents spent the best part of two months in what I consider to be a property not fit to be rented out. It was a cold winter.

Very little progress has been made, with no decent offer on the table. Our initial conversations were by phone, so I don’t have a record of what was said. I assumed that the company would act professionally and I trusted its promise that it would come back with an answer. It never did.

> Unfortunately they opted to rent rather than buy. Now they are in their eighties and have been tenants in this property for 59 years

I have started correspondence by email to have a proper record but we are getting nowhere.

For context, my parents are surviving on my father’s very modest pension, and the sums involved are quite significant to them. They unfortunately opted to rent rather than buy a property when my father was working and are among the growing number of pensioners with just enough income that they do not qualify for financial help but are having to pay an ever growing rent bill.

They have lived in the property for 59 years, so it’s a place they call home. But as tenants they have to rely on the landlord and property managers when anything is needed, and in this instance — and, to be honest, in other cases — the landlord has prioritised cost above all else. Please can you do something to help?
Mark, Northamptonshire

HOLLY THOMAS WRITES

Your parents are extremely longstanding tenants and surely deserve better than this. To be without hot water and central heating in winter is inconvenient for any household, but for two eightysomethings the situation is all the more desperate.

I find it shocking that any managing agent or landlord would think it fair or safe to make tenants wait almost 50 days for a new boiler during winter, leaving them with stone-cold water and a couple of electric heaters for warmth.

You got involved when you visited your parents at home and found out that the boiler had been broken for several weeks — they hadn’t told you. You approached Savills early on about a rent rebate. Their rent is £910 a month, so they could be due a refund of about £1,430 for the period they were without a boiler.

After several months of getting nowhere you felt this was never going to get resolved, but after I stepped in Savills came up with an offer within a week, agreeing to pay £1,800, which included a £550 gesture of goodwill to reflect the time taken to find a resolution.

Savills claimed that the issue was promptly attended to in the first instance and that approval for the installation of a new boiler was obtained from the landlord without delay. It blamed unreliable contractors for it taking so long. However, it admitted there were delays in responding.

You said: “I understand that rental properties are a business and that monetary considerations count, but to leave an octogenarian couple in a property with minimal heating and no hot water for close to two months to ensure value to the landlord is unacceptable. We should never have had to be in a position where you and I needed to get involved in a situation that could, and should, have been dealt with quickly and compassionately. Thank you very much for all you have done. My parents are very happy with the outcome.”

Savills said: “We acknowledge the length of time taken to resolve this matter and apologise to the couple for the delay. Our internal processes have since been reviewed to ensure problems of this nature are addressed more efficiently in the future. We are pleased to confirm that this matter has now been resolved.”

£1,586,121
– what Your Money Matters has saved readers this year

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires landlords to maintain heating and hot water and separately requires the property to be “fit for human habitation” throughout a tenancy. Anyone in the same kind of situation could argue the case for a place being unfit, depending on the circumstances, according to the landlord expert Rob Dix, a co-founder of the property education platform Property Hub.

He said: “There’s no simple checklist to determine whether the lack of a working boiler makes it unfit, but the time of year and vulnerability of the occupants are considered, so there’s a chance that in this situation it would have been found unfit.”

Landlord are expected to carry out repairs in a reasonable time. Dix said: “It would be hard to argue that a time lapse of 48 days is reasonable in the case of such a critical amenity. Once it became clear that the fix wouldn’t be quick, any tenants would be within their rights to request alternative accommodation.

“They could also ask the council’s private sector housing or environmental health teams to inspect the property, and they could compel the landlord to act. It’s realistic that repairs can sometimes face unavoidable delays but you shouldn’t allow the landlord’s quest to solve the problem as cheaply as possible to drag things out.”

Dix said that tenants should not withhold rental payments because they have a contractual requirement to pay rent, and withholding may harm legal action they need to take later.

“It would, however, be reasonable to pursue compensation afterwards. In my opinion a reasonable opening position for a compensation claim would be the rent for the entire period without heating, plus any provable additional costs.

“The claim should be against the landlord but you can separately complain to the managing agent about its handling.”

Tenants having difficulty with resolving landlord issues such as rent abatement can seek free guidance from organisations such as Shelter or Citizens Advice.

I hope your parents go on to have a trouble-free tenancy.

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Strategic Bond Fund ‡	130.43	...	+0.42	8.08
UK Equity A ‡	402.54	...	+8.00	3.92
UK Growth ‡	10444.83	...	+303.92	2.21
ARTEMIS FUND MGRS				
0800 092 2051				
Authorised Inv Funds				
Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	380.98	...	+9.32	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	214.24	...	+1.95	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	227.55	...	+1.28	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	68.05	...	+0.34	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	820.67	...	+6.55	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	314.55	...	+2.51	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	92.12	...	+0.05	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	904.25	...	+16.90	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	688.90	...	+15.28	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4295.01	...	-3.57	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	94.22	...	-0.03	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.43	...	+0.53	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.63	...	+0.23	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116.22	...	+0.52	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.50	...	...	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1354.24	...	+26.18	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2369.59	...	+70.74	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1114.57	...	+21.69	...
AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT				
Dlng: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511				
Health ‡	3325.00	...	+15.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2179.00	...	+40.00	1.10
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	330.20	...	+9.00	0.37
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	241.10	...	+4.60	1.10
AXA FUND MANAGERS				
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Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.10	...	...	0.52
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EDENTREE INV MGMT				
0800 358 3010				
Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡@	498.90	...	+9.60	1.77
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡@	462.50	...	+10.50	0.55
Sust Mgd Income ‡@	143.00	...	+1.00	4.72
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡@	85.32	...	+0.50	4.98
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	259.50	...	+5.10	1.63
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡	331.50	...	+7.00	1.42
FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL				
Private Clnts:0800 414161 Broker Dlgs:0800 414181				
Amer Spec ‡	2958.00	...	+82.00	...
American ‡	8048.00	...	+327.00	...
Euro Opps ‡	750.60	...	+19.20	0.48
European ‡	4477.00	...	+119.00	0.76
Global Focus ‡	3727.00	...	+130.00	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.37	...	-0.01	6.58
Global Special Sits ‡	8982.00	...	+202.00	...
Japan ‡	985.50	...	+22.10	0.34
Moneybilder Bal ‡	49.26	...	+0.23	0.60
Moneybilder Inc ‡	28.29	...	+0.08	5.29
Moneybilder UK Ind ‡	205.01	...	+2.48	2.46
Special Sits ‡	7553.00	...	+149.00	1.64
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	107.60	...	+2.40	1.40
HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS				
01296 386 386				
Authorised Inv Funds				
Share Class C				
Corporate Bond ‡	37.42	...	+0.21	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	216.60	...	+5.10	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	109.50	...	+0.50	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	121.60	...	+0.80	...
HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)				
Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6				
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)				
Amer Ind Acc ‡	1638.00	...	+56.00	0.77
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1882.00	...	+42.00	2.26
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1091.00	...	+25.00	2.30
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	445.50	...	+2.00	2.47
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	180.00	...	+0.20	2.62
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	412.20	...	+11.10	2.85
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	223.50	...	+6.00	2.84
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1121.00	...	+7.00	2.63
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	504.30	...	+3.30	2.77
Japan Ind Acc ‡	236.10	...	+6.90	1.43
Japan Ind Inc ‡	171.20	...	+4.90	1.47
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1039.00	...	-2.00	1.59
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	587.60	...	-1.60	1.62
HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class				
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	312.30	...	+1.60	4.20
Income Acc ‡	1062.00	...	...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	404.50	...	+2.40	3.30
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.40	...	...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.90	...	...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	226.70	...	+1.90	2.96
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	87.88	...	+0.74	3.03
HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)				
American Index Retail Inc ‡	1262.00	...	+43.00	0.76
INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD				
Dlng:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677				
Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121				
Invesco Funds				
Corp Bond ‡	232.09	...	+1.47	4.01
High Income Dis ‡	437.41	...	+5.70	3.12
Income & Growth Dis ‡	511.04	...	+3.71	3.06
Income Inc ‡	1686.51	...	+25.98	2.83
Money Acc ‡	107.81	...	+0.08	3.62
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.43	...	-0.05	5.78
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1411.44	...	+14.34	1.45
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1379.10	...	+49.31	1.40
INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD				
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900				
OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv				
American A Acc ‡	877.03	...	+40.48	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	472.39	...	+3.74	2.61
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	270.21	...	+1.76	2.48
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	330.75	...	+5.84	0.21
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	121.73	...	+2.21	0.95
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	376.25	...	+1.79	3.78
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.86	...	-0.02	5.19
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc ‡	144.57	...	+0.85	5.96
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.97	...	+0.40	7.65
Emerging Mkts Equity A Acc ‡	290.77	...	+1.05	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1224.53	...	-0.31	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	304.84	...	+3.61	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	408.08	...	+0.55	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2124.42	...	+55.72	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	545.10	...	+63.25	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	534.88	...	+16.45	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	410.34	...	+12.61	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	1760.34	...	+56.27	1.02
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	949.31	...	+19.36	1.03
For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)				
JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS				
Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646				
All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.90	...	+0.70	4.40
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	97.29	...	-3.61	5.40
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	360.20	...	+2.70	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	154.60	...	-0.30	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1334.00	...	+14.00	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	297.40	...	-2.10	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3281.00	...	+54.00	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	93.19	...	+0.13	6.10
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6606.00	...	+216.00	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	89.12	...	+1.42	2.40
Global Tech A Acc ‡	7102.00	...	+342.00	...
Instl UK idx Opps A Acc ‡	180.75	...	+1.30	2.20
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	187.20	...	+1.20	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	338.70	...	+7.60	1.70
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	163.10	...	+2.80	2.70
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	233.60	...	+3.90	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	230.20	...	+1.40	4.40
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.60	...	+0.34	4.40
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.56	...	+0.30	5.80
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.70	...	-0.10	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	202.60	...	+3.60	1.30
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	3035.00	...	+156.00	...
J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT				
OEIC				
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@	716.40	...	+3.30	2.50
JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD				
020 7581 3020				
Distribution & Growth ‡	125.91	...	+3.14	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	607.61	...	+13.99	0.71
European ‡	4044.14	...	+93.70	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1365.13	...	+38.17	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡	428.34	...	+1.43	3.39
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	347.56	...	+5.78	2.26
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	837.93	...	+18.83	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	474.47	...	+9.24	3.47
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	615.38	...	+17.15	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	299.18	...	+7.74	1.75
UK Growth ‡	288.16	...	+4.96	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1036.43	...	+22.23	4.58
LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD				
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956				
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	823.40	...	+16.30	190.00
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	491.70	...	-0.40	200.00
Fixed Int Acc ‡	150.50	...	+0.90	460.00
Fixed Int Dist ‡	62.22	...	+0.38	460.00
Global Health ‡	123.40	...	+2.50	0.90
Glob Tech Acc ‡	238.40	...	+11.20	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	154.10	...	+0.90	580.00
Japan Ind Acc ‡	113.20	...	+3.00	130.00
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	409.10	...	-2.60	140.00
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	544.30	...	+3.70	250.00
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	235.60	...	+1.50	250.00
US Ind Acc ‡	1428.00	...	+45.00	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	473.70	...	+8.30	90.00
M&G SECURITIES				
Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196				
Authorised Inv Funds				
Charifund Inc ‡	1918.62	...	-11.98	5.08
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2				
Extra Income Inc ‡	834.19	...	-3.63	5.05
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	67.18	...	+0.39	4.38
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.76	...	-0.05	6.26
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.48	...	+0.69	1.56
Index Trckr Inc ‡	105.73	...	+0.16	2.98
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.35	...	+0.06	4.25
UK Select A Inc ‡	3333.65	...	+68.19	2.62
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3				
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	32.87	...	+0.22	5.01
Dividend Inc ‡	67.35	...	+0.35	5.31
Recovery A Inc ‡	143.51	...	+2.40	2.83
Sml Cos Inc ‡	367.27	...	+9.00	2.79
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4				
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡	162.28	...	+0.28	3.78
MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST				
0808 005 5555				
High Income ‡	87.32	...	-0.62	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	297.90	...	+2.20	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	721.10	...	-0.60	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	324.40	...	-0.30	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	483.90	...	+2.30	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1107.00	...	+5.20	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1341.00	...	+37.00	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	746.50	...	+20.60	0.20
MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT				
Enquiries: 0800 0961 962				
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)				
Class A Shares				
Equity				
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40	...	...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65	...	...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69	...	...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53	...	...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.88	...	...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88	...	...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12	...	...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45	...	...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1111.07	...	+15.15	4.30
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1750.38	...	+23.83	4.26
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1174.65	...	+15.97	4.38
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14269.62	...	+251.79	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1644.12	...	+28.04	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1752.49	...	+29.88	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3838.06	...	+67.72	0.32
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1547.37	...	+33.35	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1516.65	...	+34.60	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1558.64	...	+35.51	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1542.01	...	+33.21	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1575.07	...	+35.93	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.74	...	+0.81	4.75
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	98.15	...	+0.14	4.79
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1382.25	...	+7.70	4.70
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3062.07	...	+17.07	4.60
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2443.76	...	+56.73	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1461.88	...	+33.37	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2573.12	...	+59.59	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1513.60	...	+34.46	...
SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS				
08457 413002				
Equity Inc Inc ‡	245.80	...	+2.50	...
Stkmkt 100 Thr ‡	230.80	...	...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	661.30	...	+7.10	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	317.50	...	+3.40	...
SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD				
0141 248 6100				
Far Eastern Inc	617.07	649.47	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1350.25	1425.07	-8.96	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.49	1508.70	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.23	593.38	...	7.81
SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS				
0845 300 2244				
Overseas Growth Investment Funds				
Tracker & Special Investment Funds				
UK Trkr A Acc ‡	609.10	...	+4.30	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	277.20	...	+1.90	2.50
UK & Income Investment Funds				
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	329.40	...	+1.50	4.00
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	108.00	...	+0.10	4.00
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	472.00	...	-0.80	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	298.20	...	+1.70	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.27	...	+0.05	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	562.10	...	+1.10	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	152.10	...	+0.30	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.90	...	+1.00	4.50
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.23	...	+0.02	4.50
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	136.50	...	+0.60	2.50
OEIC B Class				
UK Trkr B Acc ‡	674.80	...	+4.70	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	275.60	...	+1.90	2.60
OEIC C Class				
UK Eq Tkr C ‡	133.20	...	+0.50	2.60
STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS				
0845 279 3003				
Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares				
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.59	...	+0.33	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.18	...	+0.18	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.70	...	+0.40	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	295.40	...	+8.40	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	202.50	...	+3.40	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	266.90	...	+4.50	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	185.20	...	+0.70	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	48.08	...	+0.17	...
Managed Acc ‡	529.20	...	-3.00	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	259.70	...	+4.40	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	827.70	...	+28.10	...
SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS				
Enquiries:0141 222 1151				
Balanced A Acc ‡	187.08	...	+4.41	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	158.32	...	+3.71	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	133.46	...	+1.66	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	105.55	...	+1.29	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	500.02	...	+14.58	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	437.48	...	+12.75	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	493.89	...	+13.57	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	320.01	...	+5.94	2.17
THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS				
Client Serv: 0800 0684000				
Retail Shares Class 1				
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.52	...	+0.16	4.63
Threadneedle Monthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	102.93	...	+1.49	2.71
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.99	...	+0.41	4.27
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡	54.89	...	+0.41	3.95
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.64	...	+0.17	4.16
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.99	...	+0.19	3.81
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	121.81	...	+2.54	3.44
Threadneedle UK Growth & Inc Rtl Inc ‡	114.63	...	+2.39	3.15
Threadneedle UK Instl Rtl ‡	252.46	...	+3.05	1.33
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	91.41	...	+1.67	2.96
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	169.12	...	+3.12	1.31
Threadneedle U Smaller Cons Rtl Inc ‡	107.16	...	+0.59	0.38
For Resolution see Ignis				
TU FUND MANAGERS LTD				
IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis	1021.00	1021.00	+23.20	1.20

This list contains unit trusts and Oeics widely held by private investors. The weekly price change is based on a Friday-to-Thursday trading period.* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡ Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

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Business Editor
Good morning: The number of new entry-level jobs has fallen by nearly a third since the launch of the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT in November 2022.

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Savings

Easy access (without introductory bonus)

Provider	Contact	Account	Min	AER
cahoot	via website	Simple Saver	£1	4.52%
Oxbury	via website	Easy Access Summer Account	£1,000	4.33%
thisbank	via website	Triple Access Savings Account	£1,000	4.28%
Charter Savings Bank	via website	Easy Access	£1	4.21%
Kent Reliance	via website	Limited Access Saver	£1	4.21%

Long-term fixed rates

Provider	Contact	Account	Min	AER
Atom Bank	via app	5 Year Fixed Saver	£50	5%
Close Brothers	via website	5 Year Fixed Rate Bond	£10,000	5%
GB Bank	via website	5 Year Fixed Rate Bond	£1,000	4.98%
Afin Bank	via app	5 Year Fixed Term Account	£1,000	4.96%
Oxbury	via website	5 Year Bond Account	£1,000	4.88%

Easy-access cash Isas

Provider	Contact	Account	Min	AER
Hargreaves Lansdown	via website	Shawbrook-Easy Access Cash Isa	£1	4.52%
Atom Bank	via app	Easy Access Cash Isa	£1	4.25%
Kent Reliance	via branch	Easy Access Cash Isa	£1,000	4.24%
Charter Savings Bank	via website	Easy Access Cash Isa	£1	4.23%
Cynergy Bank	via website	Online Isa	£1	4.15%

Fixed cash Isas

Provider	Contact	Account	Min	AER
Tandem	via app	1 Year Fixed Rate Cash Isa	£1	4.67%
Leeds BS	via website	18 Month Fixed Rate Isa	£1,000	4.65%
Hinckley & Rugby BS	via branch/post	2 Year Fixed Term Cash Isa	£500	4.76%
Tandem	via app	3 Year Fixed Rate Cash Isa	£1	4.78%
Leek BS	via website	5 Year Fixed Rate Cash Isa	£1,000	4.85%

Lifetime cash Isas

Provider	Contact	Account	Min	AER
Moneybox	via app	Cash Lifetime Isa	£1	4.25%
Plum	via app	Lifetime Isa	£1	4.2%
Tembo	via app	Barclays-Cash Lifetime Isa	£1	4%
Paragon	via website	Cash Lifetime Isa	£1	3.51%
Bath BS	via website/app	Lifetime Isa	£1	2.6%

Regular savings accounts

Provider	Contact	Account	Min Mntly	AER
Santander	via website/app	Regular Saver CV	£1	8%
Bank of Scotland	via website	Monthly Saver F	£25	8%
Halifax	via website/app	Regular Saver CV	£25	8%
Lloyds Bank	via website/app	Club Lloyds Monthly Saver CF	£25	8%
Lloyds Bank	via website/app	Monthly Saver CF	£25	8%

Pension annuities

Single life

Provider	Contact	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Standard Life	0808 164 0164	£6,879.56	£7,508.19	£8,167.94
Canada Life	0345 606 0708	£6,949.45	£7,558.95	£8,115.16
Legal & General	0808 304 9447	£6,728.40	£7,393.32	£8,090.52
Scottish Widows	0345 757 3494	£6,775.17	£7,538.04	£8,269.06
Aviva	0800 051 4094	£6,849.55	£7,369.60	£8,106.68

Joint life

Provider	Contact	Couple: Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Standard Life	0808 164 0164	£6,589.16	£7,123.23	£7,674.84
Canada Life	0345 606 0708	£6,707.79	£7,207.01	£7,808.84
Legal & General	0808 304 9447	£6,486.96	£6,809.76	£7,508.28
Scottish Widows	0345 757 3494	£6,548.06	£7,116.75	£7,802.44
Aviva	0800 051 4094	£6,684.06	£6,781.62	£7,368.89

Based on a £100k pension pot. **Data supplied by Kellands, a chartered financial planner**

Mortgages

First-time buyer

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Redmptn charge until
Beverley	01482 881510	4.64% D	for 2 years	95%	£995	1st 2 yrs
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	4.99% V	for 2 years	95%	£0	None
West Bromwich BS	0800 298 0008	5.2% F	to 31.10.29	95%	£499	To 31.10.29
Earl Shilton	01455 844 422	5.19% D	for 5 years	95%	£125	1st 5 yrs
West Bromwich BS	0800 298 0008	5.27% F	to 31.10.31	95%	£499	To 31.10.31

Two-year fixed-rate

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Purchase or remortgage
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.59%	for 2 years	60%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.74%	for 2 years	75%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.79%	for 2 years	80%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.79%	for 2 years	85%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.87%	for 2 years	90%	£490	P

Five-year fixed-rate

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Purchase or remortgage
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.6%	for 5 years	60%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.77%	for 5 years	75%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.83%	for 5 years	80%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.83%	for 5 years	85%	£490	P
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.89%	for 5 years	90%	£490	P

Long-term fixed-rate

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Purchase or remortgage
Santander	0800 555 100	5.01%	to 02.11.36	60%	£999	R
Santander	0800 555 100	5.06%	to 02.11.36	75%	£999	R
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	5.49%	for 10 years	80%	£999	P
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	5.49%	for 10 years	85%	£999	P
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	5.74%	for 10 years	90%	£999	P

Discounted variable-rate

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Purchase or remortgage
HSBC	0800 494 999	4.05% V	for 2 years	60%	£999	P
HSBC	0800 494 999	4.17% V	for 2 years	75%	£999	P&R
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	4.17% V	for 2 years	80%	£999	P
Nationwide BS	0333 060 03 25	4.29% V	for 2 years	85%	£999	P&R
First Direct	0800 48 24 48	4.65% V	for term	90%	£490	P&R

Buy-to-let

Provider	Contact	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Purchase or remortgage
The Mortgage Works	0345 607 3021	4.34% V	to 30.09.28	75%	£1,495	P&R
Barclays	0333 202 7580	4.52% V	for 2 years	75%	£899	P
The Mortgage Works	0345 607 3021	4.29% F	to 30.09.31	75%	3%	P&R
HSBC	0800 494 999	4.48% F	to 31.10.31	75%	£3,999	P
The Mortgage Works	0345 607 3021	4.89% F	to 30.09.31	75%	£0	P&R

The selections above are based on a combination of initial rate, fee and incentive available.

National Savings & investments

	Notice or Term	Min	AER	Interest Paid
Accounts and bonds				
Guaranteed Growth Bond	1 Yr Bnd	£500	4.72% F	Maturity
Direct Saver	None	£1	3.45%	Yearly
Income Bond	None	£500	3.45%	Monthly
Tax-free products				
Junior Isa	Age 18	£1	3.7%	Yearly
Direct Isa	None	£1	3.8%	Yearly

Personal loans

Fixed monthly repayment on £10,000 for 5 years

Provider	Contact	Rep APR	Amount per month	Total repaid
M&S Bank	via website	5.9%	£192.15	£11,529
TSB	via website	6.1%	£193.03	£11,582
AA	via website	6.4%	£194.35	£11,661
Santander	via website	6.4%	£194.35	£11,661
Tesco Bank	via website	6.4%	£194.35	£11,661

Borrowing rates and availability of products are subject to credit ratings.

Credit cards

Introductory rate for balance transfers

Provider	Contact	Product name	Bal trans Transfer	Bal trans fee	Purch APR
TSB	0345 8353846	Platinum Bal Transfer	0% 1st 38 mths	3.49%	24.95%
HSBC	03455 873 444	Balance Transfer	0% 1st 36 mths	3.09%	24.9%
NatWest	03457 888 444	Longer Bal Transfer	0% 1st 36 mths	3.1%	24.9%
Virgin Money	0800 011 3210	Balance Transfer	0% 1st 36 mths	3.1%	24.9%
Barclaycard	0800 151 0900	Platinum Bal Transfer	0% 1st 36 mths	3.15%	24.9%

Introductory rate for purchases

Provider	Contact	Product name	Introductory Term	Purch APR
TSB	0345 835 3846	Platinum Purchase	0% 1st 26 mths	24.95%
M&S Bank	0800 997 996	Purchase Plus	0% 1st 25 mths	24.9%
Lloyds Bank	0345 603 7239	0% Purchase & Bal Transfer	0% 1st 25 mths	24.94%
Barclaycard	0800 151 0900	Platinum Bal Transfer	0% 1st 24 mths	24.9%
HSBC	03455 873 444	Purchase Plus	0% 1st 24 mths	24.9%

Cashback credit card

Provider	Contact	Product name	Purchase APR	Cashback
American Express	0800 917 8047	Cashback Everyday	29.1% Intro	0.5%-1% standard 5%/5mth (max £125)
Santander	0800 085 1759	Rewards Credit Card	24.9%	0.25% standard 3%/12 months P
Lloyds Bank	0345 603 7239	Ultra Credit Card	14.94% Intro	0.25% standard 1%/12 months
Virgin Money	0800 011 3210	Everyday Cashback	24.9% Intro	0.25% standard 1%/3mth (max £15 per mth)
Natwest	03457 888 444	Travel Reward	27.9%	0.1%-1% standard on spend over £1 a year T

Subject to credit ratings. Terms apply. T-eligible travel spend; P-eligible travel and eating out spend

Current accounts

Credit interest

Provider	Contact	Account name	Account Fee	AER
Nationwide BS	0800 30 20 10	FlexDirect	None	5% AE
Bank of Scotland	0345 721 3141	Vantage Classic Account	None	3% B
Lloyds Bank	0345 300 0000	Club Lloyds	None E	3% B
Bank of Scotland	0345 721 3141	Vantage Silver Account	£11.50pm	3% B
Lloyds Bank	0345 300 0000	Club Lloyds Silver Account	£11.50pm E	3% B

Authorised overdrafts

Provider	Contact	Account name	Account Fee	EAR	0% Limit
Starling	0207 930 4450	Current Account	None	15%	£0
First Direct	0345 600 2424	1st Account	None	39.9%	£250
Virgin Money	0800 678 3654	M Plus Account	None	19.9%	£0
Virgin Money	0800 678 3654	Club M Account	£14 pm	19.9%	£0
Lloyds Bank	0345 300 0000	Club Lloyds	None E	29.9%	£100

Interest rates paid up to a specified level, terms may apply for rates shown. A-introductory rate, B-certain balance needed for high interest, C-existing customer, D-discounted variable rate, E-terms apply, F-fixed rate, L-limited access, V-variable rate. Savings rates are AER variable unless stated. Methods of opening and operating accounts vary. Rates and terms subject to change. No liability accepted for loss arising from use of this information. Readers who are not financial professionals should seek expert advice. Rates correct at 11am, Aug 6

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Money

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's trailing 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities are based on closing prices. Investment trust high and low prices are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
86¾	33½	Aston Martin Lag	35¼	+ 1½	...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**	252½	+ 1	5.8	11.7
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM◆	0⅝		...	-3.4
4006	2624	**Admiral**	3886	– 14	3.7	15.8
662½	414½	AJ Bell	610½	+ 11	2.4	23.8
28761½	22372½	AON Corp‡	26609¼	– 8½	0.9	...
1130	799	Arbuthnot◆	832½	– 5	6.6	7.6
276½	145½	Ashmore Group	224½	+ 5	7.5	18.5
2126½	1487½	Australia & NZ	1974⅛	– 18	5.8	19.4
717½	590½	**Aviva**	712½	+ 2⅛	5.5	26.5
1121½	665	Banco Santander	1096	– 4	1.5	14.1
554¼	352½	**Barclays**‡	516	– 4	2.2	11.8
17½	4	Blue Star Capital◆	4¼		...	-2.2
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs◆	676		5.4	5.1
363½	212	Bridgepoint Grp	342	+ 4⅛	2.8	68.4
352	264½	Chesnara	340	– 2	6.6	-67.3
492	349	City of London Grp	492	+ 6	6.7	16.5
563½	318½	Close Bros	433¼	+ ⅝	...	-6.5
753	203	CMC Markets‡	690	– 3	2.0	25.1
2957¼	2057	Deutsche Bank	2816⅞	+ 16½	3.0	10.4
93	74½	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74½	– ½	0.9	...
240½	136	EPE Special Opps◆	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske◆	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2215	Georgia Capital	4400	+ 105	...	2.7
57	43¼	Hansard Global	52	+ 1	8.6	40.0
230	194	Helios U/W◆	223		4.5	7.7
1904	1257½	**Hiscox**	1829	+ 18	2.1	13.7
1610	927½	**HSBC**	1529¼	+ 8	3.6	17.0
1956	1016	**IG Group**	1343	+ 31	3.2	9.3
204	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt◆	112½	+ ¼	8.9	7.1
2340	1424½	**ICG**	2042	+ 14	4.3	12.2
145¾	115⅝	Intl Public P'ship	143½	– ⅝	6.1	-12.9
690	499⅛	**Investec**	673½	+ 1½	5.7	8.7
76	60	Investment Co	75		...	...
73¾	48	IP Group	70⅜	+ 1	1.8	9.7
24	6½	Jarvis Securities◆	8		43.8	2.5
214½	113⅜	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	161⅜	– ⅝	3.7	8.4
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs‡	597½	+ 4	2.8	6.7
318½	217¼	**Legal & General**	316½	+ 4⅜	6.9	31.7
12540	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	12440	+ 270	3.0	8.7
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt‡	305	+ 2	6.2	19.8
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp◆	37½		8.4	16.8
117½	77⅛	**Lloyds Banking**‡	115⅛	+ ½	3.5	16.4
22	14	LMS Capital	15¼	– ¼	26.2	...

Investment companies

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2867	– 4	2.9	5.3
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	384½		3.5	12.0
1758	1408¼	Aberforth SmlrI‡	1732	+ 24	2.8	27.1
1391	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1384	+ 1	2.1	74.8
399	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	397	+ 8	3.9	32.1
220	116⅜	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
273	235½	AVI Global	266	+ 2½	1.7	52.5
194	154½	AVI Japan	170½	+ 2½	1.3	58.0
331	263	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	313½	+ 3½	0.8	...
126	91⅜	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	125	+ 1½	0.6	...
1086	811½	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1078	– 2	0.9	...
173⅜	123	Baillie Gifford SN	172	+ 1⅜	0.4	...
231	180½	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	230	+ 3	2.7	36.9
153⅜	121⅜	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	152¼	– ⅜	1.9	67.6
445	385	BH Macro GBP	419½	– 1½	...	19.8
1712	809	Biotech Growth	1692	+ 12	...	-390.5
289½	197	BlckRck Amer Inc	287	+ 4	5.2	...
205	118½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	180½	– ½	3.2	51.6
208	162½	BlckRck Fro Inv	192½	+ 2	4.0	25.6
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	614	+ 3	1.2	89.1
238	198	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	229		3.4	31.7
288½	230½	BlckRck SmlrI‡	283	+ 3½	2.8	32.3
1072½	543½	BlckRck Wld Min	982	+ 30	2.4	40.8
1665	1274	Brown Adv US Sm	1632½	– 2½	...	-272.5
1584	1336	Brunner‡	1564	+ 8	1.7	56.1
395	312	Caledonia Inv	386	– 2	2.0	50.1
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	597	+ 4	3.7	27.7
155⅝	86	Crystal Amber Fd	88½	– ½	+6.1	...
592	439½	CT Priv Eq Ord	512	+ 12	5.5	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	363	+ 1	3.7	29.9
120	92	CT UK HIT B‡	112		5.3	23.1
126	97	CT UK HIT‡	118	– 1¼	5.1	24.3
480½	460	Dunedin Ent‡	475		...	...
861	737½	Edinburgh IT	861	+ 5	3.7	32.4
294½	186½	Edin Wwide	247½	+ 7½	...	-223.0
1332	325½	**F&C Inv Trust**	343½		1.2	76.4
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	612	+ 6	3.3	27.2
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	267½	+ 3½	3.4	29.0
1574	811	FdityEmrgMkt	1432	+ 2	1.4	62.3
444½	367½	Fidelity European Trust	443	+ 2	2.2	39.2
475¼	372	Fidlty Spec Val	475	+ 5	2.2	38.7
915	706½	Fins Gwth & Inc	826	+ 11	2.4	43.7
85⅝	69⅜	GCP Infrastructure‡	81¾	– ⅛	8.6	38.0
370	312	Global Opps Tst	330	– 7	3.1	42.3
99	93	Golden Prospect‡	98⅝		-14.7	...
68⅞	57⅜	Greencoat Renew	66⅛	– 1¼	-16.4	...
118⅞	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind	114	– 1	9.4	-13.1
344	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	334	+ 6	1.3	75.9
330	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	321		1.4	73.0
3480	2675	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3450	+ 20	...	-58.2
214	173½	Hend High Inc	210	+ 1	5.3	18.6
996	769	Hend Smlr	991	+ 3	2.9	38.0
3290⅝	2285	Herald Inv Trust	3035		...	...
524	318½	HgCapital Trust	396	+ 5	1.3	...
141	107½	HICL Infra	139	+ ¼	6.1	10.1
1611½	1288½	ICG Ent Tr	1478	+ 10	2.8	-116.3
494½	379	Impax Env Mkts	440	+ 2	1.2	89.1
519	368½	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	492½	– ½	3.9	50.1
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc‡	170½		7.2	13.0
427	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	421		3.8	84.0
1258	1041	JPM American	1250	+ 6	0.9	...
652	392½	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	570	– 6	5.5	...
313	250½	JPM China‡	277		4.9	71.2
986	787½	JPM Claverhs‡	984	+ 6	3.7	29.2
310	181½	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	240	– 10½	0.2	...
181¼	118½	JPM Em Mkts‡	163⅜		4.6	71.0
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	634	+ 1	2.5	34.9
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	205	+ 1	2.9	36.0
641	529½	JPM GG&I	638½	+ 2½	3.9	77.2
1098	799	JPM India‡	904	+ 12	4.9	...
849	639	JPM Japan	837	+ 1	1.0	82.5
463	365	JPM SmlIr Co	451½	+ 2½	0.7	...
1279½	977½	Law Debenture	1276	+ 10	2.9	34.2
190	143	Lowland Inv	188	– ½	3.6	27.9
139½	139⅛	Marwyn Val Inv‡	138½		15.3	...
288	234½	Mercantile IT	288	+ 3	2.9	31.1
687	536	Merchants Trust‡	685	+ 5	4.3	22.4
804	682	Mid Wynd	794	+ 4	1.1	...
1664	1360	Monks Inv Trust‡	1620	+ 6	0.1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	177		0.9	91.2
1036	854½	Murray Income Trust‡	1016	+ 6	4.0	26.3
372½	287	Murray Intl‡	370	+ ½	3.5	26.6
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	422	+ 4	1.4	75.4
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	400	+ 1	...	...
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**	3912	+ 8	1.4	3.7
555	508	Personal Assets	555	+ 3	1.0	92.0
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	664	– 5	...	-790.5
82½	63¼	Renewables Infra	78½	+ 1⅛	9.7	-14.5
2645	1932	RIT Cap Ptnr	2630	+ 15	1.7	...
990½	490	Riverstone	602	+ 3	...	-37.2
738	488¼	Schroder TotRt	697	– 7	1.6	71.0
892	596	Schrd Asia Pac	819	– 7	1.6	62.0
378	310	Schrod Inc Gwth	375		3.9	29.9
401	268	Schrod Jap Gwth	393	+ 3	3.1	56.9
782	652	Schrod UKMid‡	780	+ 10	2.9	31.2
17½	12¼	Schroder UK PP Tr	17	– ¼	...	-70.6
571	480½	Scot American	570	+ 5	2.9	36.4
1563	1015¼	**Scot Mortgage**	1396½	+ 32	0.3	...
88	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	86½	+ ¼	7.9	12.7
253	215½	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	232	+ 1	3.6	35.7
352	196½	Temp Emg Mkt	312	– ½	1.7	57.9
429½	329	Temple Bar	429	+ 3	3.6	31.1
198½	162½	The Gbl Smaller‡	195½		1.6	66.4
9	0⅞	Potentially AI	6¾	+ ⅛	-1.7	...
364½	291	TR Property	316	– 1	5.1	20.0
198	187	UIL	198		19.5	...
302	243	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	290		3.3	21.4
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	716	+ 2	...	4.6
398	306½	Ww Health	384	+ 6	0.6	...

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12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
6347¼	4186	Sun Life Canada	6029½	– 92⅜	3.4	...
6¼	2¼	Tavistock Invs◆	3¼		3.2	2.6
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp	4936	+ 46	5.2	6.9
1¾	0⅛	Tern◆	1⅜		...	-1.6
60	40⅜	Time Finance◆	52	+ ½	...	8.2
0⅛	0⅛	Tooru◆	0⅛		...	-1.6
4	1½	Truetide◆	3¾	+ ¼	...	-6.0
132	77⅛	Vanquis Banking Gp	81½	+ ½	...	25.5
2800	2000	Volvere◆	2100	– 10	...	11.1
7239¼	5453½	Wells Fargo‡	6433¾	– 71½	2.3	...
2275½	1627¼	Westpac Bkg Corp	1985⅞	– 29½	4.1	18.9
31¼	23	Worsley Investors	28½		...	...
57550	49947¼	Zurich Insurance	54407	+ 419½	5.1	18.5

Construction & Property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
380	181	Alumasc◆	220	+ 2½	5.0	8.5
6½	4½	Aseana Properties	4⅞		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics◆	1½		...	-150.0
900	541	Balfour Beatty	881	+ 21½	1.6	16.7
410¼	235½	**Barratt Redrow**	323½	+ 3¾	5.3	23.8
2890	1715	Bellway	2124	+ 26	3.4	16.0
4442	2796	Berkeley	3626	+ 34	...	10.9
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	900	– 7	5.2	...
8362¼	7584⅜	Kingspan Group	7090¼		0.7	22.4
726	522½	**Land Securities**	714½	+ 1½	5.8	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	195	– ½	6.4	...
25⅜	4¼	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6¼		...	-0.3
209½	124	Marshalls	181¾	+ 6½	3.7	31.8
108¾	66	Michelmersh Brick◆	76½	+ 1½	6.0	19.0
1	0⅛	Mindflair◆	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4494	+ 26	3.6	12.1
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8800		6.0	16.9
85	65¼	NewRiver REIT‡	81	– ⅞	8.3	...
234	160	Palace Capital	176	+ 1	8.5	39.1
320	261	Panther Securities◆	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1166½	+ 11	5.1	13.1
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅜	Primary Health Props‡	95¾	+ ¼	7.6	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv◆	30⅞		4.9	-61.8
849½	578¾	Safestore	626½	– 2	4.9	...
1126	791½	Savills	976		3.5	18.8
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv◆	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro**‡	959⅝	– 2⅜	3.3	...
162⅜	124½	Shaftesbury Capital	145	+ ½	3.0	7.8
460	233	Billington Hldgs◆	425	+ 5	2.6	40.9
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	157	+ 3	5.0	8.9
383¾	271⅜	Breedon	353¼	+ 7¾	4.3	14.6
451⅛	318⅛	**British Land**	443¼	+ 1¾	5.2	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2196	1469⅜	Derwent London	2100	+ 46	3.9	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors◆	4⅝		...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property◆	12½		2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King◆	42½	+ 10	5.3	28.7
62	31⅜	Foxtons Group‡	37½	+ ⅞	3.1	8.7
632	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	619	– 2	3.2	18.4
394½	241	Genuit Group	313⅝	+ 11¼	4.1	17.2
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	276		4.0	10.2
1045⅜	788½	Grafton Grp Units	1042¾	+ 13¼	3.6	14.8
213	149½	Grainger	176¼	+ 2¼	4.8	6.4
377	270	Great Portland Est	357¾	+ 1¾	2.3	0.0
391¼	263⅞	Hammerson	374⅜	– 1⅞	4.9	...
191	116¼	Harworth Group	181	+ 3	1.0	62.4
400	225	Heath (Samuel)◆	255		5.1	31.9
241½	180⅛	Helical	204	+ 1	1.3	42.2
150¾	87⅜	Ibstock	93	+ 1⅞	2.2	...
161½	112	James Halstead◆	128⅝	+ 3½	6.9	13.3
3518	1238	Keller	3076	– 4	2.6	15.2
13⅛	6¼	SIG	8¾	+ ¼	...	-1.6
153	105	SigmaRoc◆	135	+ 3¼	...	18.5
113	86⅛	Sirius Real Estate	99⅛	– 2⅜	5.5	7.6
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23⅛	15¾	Steppe Cement◆	22		...	19.7
116⅞	74½	Taylor Wimpey	84½	+ ½	4.9	30.2
140	104	Town Centre	128½	– 1½	3.9	...
723½	493⅜	Travis Perkins	675	+ 12	1.7	-8.1
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**	166¼	+ 1¾	5.0	...
759½	442¼	Unite Group	532½	– 2	7.1	...
746⅜	220	Vistry Group	283⅝	+ ¾	...	6.7
434⅛	312	Workspace Group	363¼	+ 3	7.2	...
920	730	Wynnstay Props◆	895		3.2	12.5

Consumer Goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
229	90⅜	AEP Plantations	176⅝	– 3⅜	3.4	10.3
30	17⅛	Airea◆	26½		3.8	10.4
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2130	+ 13	3.0	15.0
715⅝	589	Barr (AG)	607	– 3	3.1	14.4
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob**‡	4421	+ 45	5.5	12.6
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1164½	– 30½	...	...
181¼	85⅞	C&C Group	99⅜		5.0	...
5⅛	2¼	Capital Metals◆	4¼		...	-35.4
460	271	Churchill China◆	390		5.4	9.8
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4960	+ 44	2.1	22.4
1515⅝	821	Cole fax◆	1455		0.4	10.3
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5270	+ 60	2.1	17.8
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1790	+ 57½	2.1	30.9
0¼	0	Distil◆	0		...	-0.6
1918	1160	Evans (M,P,)◆	1676	+ 2	3.6	10.4
151½	114½	Fevara	1391½	+ 2	1.7	6.0
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**‡	18880	– 60	3.0	30.3
2185⅜	1028⅛	Glanbia	2072⅞	+ 51¼	1.8	38.2
307½	191½	Greencore	263¾	+ 2¾	1.0	20.0
83¼	4¼	Headlam	12¾	+ 1	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	613	+ 1	5.7	7.0
3632	2626	**Imperial Brands**	2791	+ 32	4.0	11.1
7646⅜	5567¼	Kerry Group	7143¾	– 17¾	1.7	20.8
170	106½	McBride	164⅜	– 2¾	1.8	8.4
180	85	Mulberry Group◆	175	+ 5	...	-13.5
1275	880	Nichols◆‡	1040		3.7	17.7
374	252	Norcros	334	– 11	3.4	...
379	309	Origin Ents◆	366		4.0	8.6
1	0¼	PACSCo◆	0⅜		...	-0.0
138	47⅜	Portmeirion◆	50		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis◆	1⅛		...	-55.0
114	65½	PZ Cussons	106¾	+ 4⅜	3.5	22.7
138	87	REA	110	– 1	...	-212.0
213⅜	155	Tandem◆	187	– 8	1.6	12.1
330	220	The Character Grp◆	315		2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp◆	6½		...	-15.1
5542⅜	3644	**Unilever**‡	4670	– 39	3.4	12.6
97⅜	19½	Victoria◆	60¼	– 2⅜	...	-0.2

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2195	1458	Avon Technologies‡	1896	– 20	1.0	73.3
1527	902⅜	**Babcock**	1186½	– 3½	0.6	28.2
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2220	+ 20	1.7	32.3
1500	500	Braime A N/V◆	1200		1.4	6.4
2295	1376	Braime Group◆	2250		0.7	11.9
550	350	Caffyns◆	400		2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ld◆	0⅛		...	-3.7
340	202¼	Castings‡	291	– 4	6.3	16.8
27	12½	Checkit◆	21½	+ 2	...	-8.3
644	446½	Chemring Group	627	+ 2½	1.3	35.2
55	28½	Chesterfield Spec Cyl◆	34½		...	-38.3
1538	881½	Cohort◆	1298	+ 16	1.4	24.9
28500	9020	Goodwin	20650	+ 1850	1.4	63.1
4902	3194	**Halma**‡	3796	– 6	0.7	38.5
3145	1951½	Hill & Smith	3095	+ 5	1.7	30.1
2¼	1	Image Scan◆	2⅛	– ⅛	...	-12.4
3142	2202	**IMI**	3136	+ 6	1.1	25.2
7000	3480	Judges Scl.◆	4250	– 25	2.7	51.4
90	34	LPA◆	82½		...	-31.2
685	409½	**Melrose**	485⅛	+ 8¼	1.5	16.7
257	167	Morgan Advanced	254	+ 9	4.8	33.9
405	200	Mpac◆	327½	– 5	...	-10.3
1800	1120	MS Intl◆	1600	+ 115	1.6	23.7
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2888	– 10	0.8	34.1
2413⅜	1779½	Phillips Elec	1987¼	+ 19½	3.7	-46.4
4½	1	PipeHawk◆	2½		...	-3.0
5490	2900	Renishaw	5235	+ 70	1.5	45.4
1586	990	**Rolls-Royce**‡	1530	– 3⅜	0.7	22.0
489½	286½	Rotork	487	– ¾	1.7	35.3
105	60	SDI Group◆	91	+ 1	...	19.4
318½	161	Senior	292		0.7	-286.3
2052½	2026	SKF Group	2040⅞		3.0	30.3
2754½	2088	**Smiths**	2698	+ 21	1.7	31.5
215	135	Solid State◆	186		1.5	25.8
245	170	Somero Enter◆	232½	– ½	3.3	16.5
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7500	+ 125	2.3	33.8
7½	3½	Tanfield◆	3⅝	– ⅛	...	-3.5
334	240	Thorpe FW◆	255	– 10	2.8	11.8
142¾	47	Transense Tech◆	48½		...	5.2
507½	350	Vesuvius	405¾	+ 13¾	5.8	19.2
710	325	Vp ex	553	– 3	0.9	21.2
3580	2254	**Weir**	2722	+ 26	1.5	28.4
2060	843	XP Power	1776	– 16	...	-42.3

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
284½	187	Advanced Medical◆	281		1.0	60.8
12⅜	5	Allergy Therapeutics◆	5½	+ ¼	...	-6.5
8	0½	CellExHealth◆	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	377½	Anpario◆	530		2.4	13.2
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca**‡	11896	+ 46	2.0	24.3
3⅛	1⅜	Cambridge Nutri Sci◆	1⅜		...	2.6
259¼	193	**Convatec**	232½	+ 5⅝	2.4	36.5
38	20	Potter & Moore◆‡	23½	+ 1	2.3	7.7
116⅜	72	Eco Animal Health◆	98½	– 1	...	30.2
32	21½	EKF Diagnostics◆	26	+ ½	...	55.3
12	0¼	Futura Medical◆	0⅜		...	-0.1
3228½	1943	Genus	2304	+ 2	1.4	78.6
2282	1288½	**GSK**	1960½	+ 24	3.6	13.9
0⅛	0⅛	Gunsynd◆	0⅛		...	-2.1
416½	274½	**Haleon**	369¾	– 1¼	2.0	19.9
1865	1187	Hikma Pharma	1677	– 22	3.8	12.4
270	150½	Hutchmed China◆	184	+ 9½	...	4.7
19⅜	1⅜	ImmuPharma◆	4		...	-10.8
32	12¼	Inspiration Health◆	18½		...	-15.9
15	6½	IXICO◆	8		...	-4.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	69	–	2⅛	... 30.2
4780½	3665½	BASF	4391½	+	20⅛	4.4 28.2
4606¾	2160½	Bayer	4273¾	+	51⅞	0.2 -13.6
98⅛	71	Coats Group	86½	+	1	2.9 19.7
3352	2426¾	**Croda**	3265	–	16	3.4 73.5
460	230	Cropper (James)♦	450			... 14.6
195⅛	136	Elementis	187¼	+	⅝	1.8 -32.4
110	6⅛	Hardide♦	100	–	½	... ...
3775	2095	International Paper	3050	+	5	4.5 -7.6
2434	1731⅜	Johnson Matthey	2168	+	16	3.6 -37.9
1085	660	Mondi	921½	+	16½	1.3 28.8
169⅞	110	Robinson♦	125			4.8 9.2
968½	597	Swire Pacific	935	+	20½	4.0 45.6
12⅜	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8¼			... -7.6
124	16¾	Synthomer	122	+	4⅜	... -1.3
2858¼	2026⅝	Takeda Pharma	2600½	+	54⅛	3.7 -57.3
831	515	Victrex	822	+	6	7.2 25.7
430	320	Wynnstay♦	375	+	2½	4.8 38.0
479⅞	318½	Zotefoams	420	–	7	1.9 9.1

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	303	+	9	... 14.6
260	160	Celtic♦	205	–	8	... 5.7
221½	164	Domino's Pizza	205½	–	¼	5.6 13.6
1020½	500⅜	**Entain**	545	+	8	3.6 -5.2
73	19¾	Evoke	45¼	+	1	... -0.4
54½	29	Gaming Realms♦	32			... 15.8
310	210	Heavitree♦	300			2.2 5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	225			2.9 4.2
$175.70	115.65	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$158	–	0.75	1.2 32.2
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	282½	–	½	... 9.5
297	129⅜	On The Beach	189¾	+	1⅜	2.1 34.5
160	86	Rank Group	102¼	+	2⅛	2.9 10.8
215	137¼	SSP	214¼	+	2	2.1 -23.0
0⅝	0⅛	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜			... -0.3
824	530½	Wetherspoon JD	814	+	4	1.5 13.6
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2517	–	11	3.9 20.4

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
76⅛	51⅛	Aeorema Comms♦	60			4.4 47.7
29	18	Altitude Group♦	23½			... -94.0
115	70¼	Arcontech Group♦	79½			5.0 11.3
844⅛	418⅝	**Autotrader**	521	+	9¼	2.2 15.2
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub♯	650	+	6	2.5 19.6
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1⅝			... -0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½			... 23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenai♦	0⅛			... -3.1
22	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜			... -0.9
785½	262¼	Future	329⅝	+	12	5.2 5.3
154	60⅛	GlobalData	86¾	+	2¼	1.7 19.7
110	44	IG Design Group♦	102	+	1½	1.0 -0.9
1000	719	**Informa**‡	904⅜	–	¾	2.5 ...
87⅜	65¼	ITV	73	–	¼	6.8 12.4
220	98½	ME Group	122¼	+	2	6.9 8.1
0¼	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛			... 12.5
27	12	Mission Group♦	18			... -0.8
220¼	139⅛	Mony Group‡	201⅜	+	⅜	6.3 13.2
2341⅞	1624⅛	News Corp A	2119¾	–	67½	0.7 ...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2429¾	–	70⅞	0.6 ...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦♯	327	+	7½	4.7 -10.9
59	40	React♦	40½	–	2	... -27.9
3691	1991	**Relx**‡	2627	+	24	2.6 23.3
827	391⅜	Rightmove	473	+	3½	2.3 16.8
270	131	SpaceandPeople♦	137½			... 6.4
131½	95⅛	STV Group	106¾	+	¼	... -9.9
470	170½	System1 Group♦	325			1.8 31.2
4668¼	4573¼	21st Cent Fox A	4573¼			0.9 ...
3357¾	3306½	21st Cent Fox B	3357¼			1.2 ...
369	230	Wilmington	278			4.2 21.6
411⅜	218½	WPP	411⅜	+	16⅜	3.6 8.2
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	56½			... -5.5

Natural Resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	ADM Energy♯	0			... 1.2
17⅞	8⅛	H-Power♦	11⅝	+	⅜	... -4.6
89⅜	36¼	Afentra♦	60⅝	–	1⅜	... -58.4
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0			... -1.1
0¼	0⅛	Allen Metals♦	0⅛			... -13.3
2⅞	1	Aminex	1¼	–	⅛	... -13.5
8924	3349⅜	Anglo Amer Plat	6601¼	+	278½	6.9 24.5
4239	2103⅜	**Anglo Amer**	4022	+	46	0.7 -16.4
435	154½	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	422	+	4½	0.7 36.7
4475	1961½	**Antofagasta**	3981	+	7	1.2 39.8
1¼	0⅛	Arc Minerals♦	0½			... -1.2
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½			... -150.0
0⅞	0⅛	Arkle Resources♦	0⅝			... -10.6
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½			... -13.1
1094	440½	Atalaya Mine	968½	+	14½	1.0 18.6
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3			... -0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10	+	1	... -3.0
0⅛	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛			... 9.3
3495	1918	BHP Group	3346	+	43	3.1 25.4
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅛	–	¼	... -91.5
122½	10½	Bougainville	10¾			... -16.0
609⅜	399⅛	**BP**	517¼	–	2½	4.8 ...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0			... -0.6
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5⅛	–	⅛	... -9.8
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾			... -11.2
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1615	+	95	2.6 7.7
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise♯	1⅞			... 3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	154⅛	+	2½	7.8 -4.9
2¼	1⅜	Chariot Ltd♦	1½			... ...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0			... -6.3
0½	0⅛	Corcel♦	0⅜			... -2.1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	9½			... -1.9
300½	108⅜	DRD Gold	177	+	8¼	2.3 14.8
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼			... -3.3
0⅛	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0			... -0.4
5620	2390	**Endeavour**	4046	+	158	3.3 19.5
28	9⅛	EnQuest	22⅞	+	¼	3.5 ...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2¼			... 15.3
2⅜	0⅛	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1¾			... -9.0
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo♯	28⅝			... -4.5
4472	1617	**Fresnillo**	2864	+	126	3.9 20.6
80	3	Gaiantas Gold♦	24½	+	½	... -6.6
12½	2⅜	GCM Resources♦	3⅜	–	¼	... -4.9
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	4	+	⅝	... -0.1
3⅜	1⅜	Getech♦	3¼			... -7.4
707¼	275⅛	**Glencore**	557	–	9	2.3 ...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅜			... -4.5
4582¾	2310½	Gold Fields	3041¾	+	268⅛	3.8 ...
21	6½	Goldplat♦	18½	+	1	2.8 30.8
2	0⅛	Goldstone Res♦	0¾			... -0.9
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	641	+	38½	... 19.3
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	293	–	7	... 32.7
235	160⅜	Gulf Keystone	174⅜	+	4	7.3 33.8
858	246½	Hochschild	509½	+	29½	0.9 17.6
553	294	Hunting	443	–	4	2.2 22.8
0⅛	0	Ironveld♦	0			... -2.1
219¾	57⅞	ITM Power♦	109⅞	+	¾	... -14.9
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2½			... -3.4
1⅜	0⅛	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅛			... -3.9
2⅜	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1¾	+	⅛	... -11.5
345	178⅛	Kenmare Res	210	+	10	... -0.8
5⅞	1½	Landore Res♦	1¾			... -1.8
89¾	36¼	Afentra♦	60⅝	–	1⅜	... -58.4
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0			... -1.1
0¼	0⅛	Allen Metals♦	0⅛			... -13.3
2⅞	1	Aminex	1¼	–	⅛	... -13.5
8924	3349⅜	Anglo Amer Plat	6601¼	+	278½	6.9 24.5
4239	2103⅜	**Anglo Amer**	4022	+	46	0.7 -16.4
435	154½	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	422	+	4½	0.7 36.7
4475	1961½	**Antofagasta**	3981	+	7	1.2 39.8
1¼	0⅛	Arc Minerals♦	0½			... -1.2
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½			... -150.0
0⅞	0⅛	Arkle Resources♦	0⅝			... -10.6
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½			... -13.1
1094	440½	Atalaya Mine	968½	+	14½	1.0 18.6
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3			... -0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10	+	1	... -3.0
0⅛	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛			... 9.3
3495	1918	BHP Group	3346	+	43	3.1 25.4
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅛	–	¼	... -91.5
122½	10½	Bougainville	10¾			... -16.0
609⅜	399⅛	**BP**	517¼	–	2½	4.8 ...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0			... -0.6
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5⅛	–	⅛	... -9.8
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾			... -11.2
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1615	+	95	2.6 7.7
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise♯	1⅞			... 3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	154⅛	+	2½	7.8 -4.9
2¼	1⅜	Chariot Ltd♦	1½			... ...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0			... -6.3
0½	0⅛	Corcel♦	0⅜			... -2.1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	9½			... -1.9
300½	108⅜	DRD Gold	177	+	8¼	2.3 14.8
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼			... -3.3
0⅛	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0			... -0.4
5620	2390	**Endeavour**	4046	+	158	3.3 19.5
28	9⅛	EnQuest	22⅞	+	¼	3.5 ...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2¼			... 15.3
2⅜	0⅛	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1¾			... -9.0
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo♯	28⅝			... -4.5
4472	1617	**Fresnillo**	2864	+	126	3.9 20.6
80	3	Gaiantas Gold♦	24½	+	½	... -6.6
12½	2⅜	GCM Resources♦	3⅜	–	¼	... -4.9
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	4	+	⅝	... -0.1
3⅜	1⅜	Getech♦	3¼			... -7.4
707¼	275⅛	**Glencore**	557	–	9	2.3 ...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅜			... -4.5
4582¾	2310½	Gold Fields	3041¾	+	268⅛	3.8 ...
21	6½	Goldplat♦	18½	+	1	2.8 30.8
2	0⅛	Goldstone Res♦	0¾			... -0.9
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	641	+	38½	... 19.3
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	293	–	7	... 32.7
235	160⅜	Gulf Keystone	174⅜	+	4	7.3 33.8
858	246½	Hochschild	509½	+	29½	0.9 17.6
553	294	Hunting	443	–	4	2.2 22.8
0⅛	0	Ironveld♦	0			... -2.1
219¾	57⅞	ITM Power♦	109⅞	+	¾	... -14.9
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2½			... -3.4
1⅜	0⅛	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅛			... -3.9
2⅜	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1¾	+	⅛	... -11.5
345	178⅛	Kenmare Res	210	+	10	... -0.8
5⅞	1½	Landore Res♦	1¾			... -1.8
89¾	36¼	Afentra♦	60⅝	–	1⅜	... -58.4
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0			... -1.1
0¼	0⅛	Allen Metals♦	0⅛			... -13.3
2⅞	1	Aminex	1¼	–	⅛	... -13.5
8924	3349⅜	Anglo Amer Plat	6601¼	+	278½	6.9 24.5
4239	2103⅜	**Anglo Amer**	4022	+	46	0.7 -16.4
435	154½	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	422	+	4½	0.7 36.7
4475	1961½	**Antofagasta**	3981	+	7	1.2 39.8
1¼	0⅛	Arc Minerals♦	0½			... -1.2
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½			... -150.0
0⅞	0⅛	Arkle Resources♦	0⅝			... -10.6
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½			... -13.1
1094	440½	Atalaya Mine	968½	+	14½	1.0 18.6
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3			... -0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10	+	1	... -3.0
0⅛	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛			... 9.3
3495	1918	BHP Group	3346	+	43	3.1 25.4
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅛	–	¼	... -91.5
122½	10½	Bougainville	10¾			... -16.0
609⅜	399⅛	**BP**	517¼	–	2½	4.8 ...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0			... -0.6
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5⅛	–	⅛	... -9.8
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾			... -11.2
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1615	+	95	2.6 7.7
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise♯	1⅞			... 3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	154⅛	+	2½	7.8 -4.9
2¼	1⅜	Chariot Ltd♦	1½			... ...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0			... -6.3

Professional & Support Services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
3758½	2553½	**Shell**	3277½	–	37½	4.6 14.6
7	2½	Shuka Minerals♦	2¾			... -2.1
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1¾			... -1.5
27	5½	Star Energy♦	24	–	½	... -4.3
4½	0⅞	Sunda Energy♦	1½			... -1.4
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0			... -3.2
0		Synergia Energy♦	0			... 0.5
0⅛	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0⅛			... -6.5
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½			... -0.6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6346¼	–	39⅛	4.7 12.4
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0			... -0.4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	14			... 47.1
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0			... -0.2
13	2½	URU Metals♦	4			... -2.7
0⅝	0⅛	Vast Resources♯	0⅛			... -0.5
9	1⅜	Westmount Energy♦	3¼			... -8.3
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1¼			... -5.7
4⅛	2½	Zephyr Energy♦	3¼			... -7.6

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
507	329¼	**Rentokil**	360½	–	3⅜	2.6 26.1
310	222	Restore♦	301½	–	2½	2.4 -64.1
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½			... -0.3
30	13⅜	Roebuck Food Group♦	26			... -9.0
752½	536⅛	RS Group	743½	–	3	3.1 21.5
150	85	RTC Group♦	90	+	2½	7.5 6.4
120	68	RWS Holdings♦	118	–	¼	5.4 -4.4
612	520	Science Group♦	585			1.7 7.8
325¼	211⅜	Serco	265½	+	5¼	1.7 18.5
79⅜	54	Smiths News	71⅜	–	1⅜	7.8 6.1
30	13¼	Software Circle♦	16	–	⅞	... -76.2
52½	36⅛	Staffline Group♦	43¾	–	⅝	... 11.2
287	132¼	SThree	285½	+	14	5.0 20.8
350	146	Synectics♦	185	+	2½	2.7 8.4
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	0⅝			... -0.6
74	46	Tribal♦	63	–	1	2.1 15.0
84¼	58	Vianet♦	66			3.6 46.2
490	294½	ZIGUP	467	+	3½	5.8 13.9

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
252	140⅝	Alfa Financial	166½	+	1¼	5.8 16.3
307	195	Aptitude Software	198			2.7 27.1
129	55	Bango♦	62½	–	½	... -8.6
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12½	–	¼	... -4.0
33	19⅜	Berkeley Res	25			... -65.4
3½	1¼	Blackbird♦	1½			... -2.4
194	74	Celebrus Tech♦‡	106½	–	½	3.2 -118.7
28	12½	Cirata♦	13⅜	–	½	... -3.0
0⅞	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0½			... 0.4
4962	2222	**Computacenter**	4828	–	56	1.5 33.0
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	250	–	5	0.5 42.7
13½	7½	Corero♦	8¾			... -118.0
2644	988	Craneware♦	1318	–	22	2.5 31.6
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½			... 20.8
9⅞	5¾	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9¾			... -8.4
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	11	+	⅛	... -7.5
0⅝	0	Forgent♦	0			... -0.0
165¼	94½	FDM Group	111¼	+	2½	6.3 21.4
480	114	Filtronic♦	244	+	2	... ...
265	180⅜	GB Group	237½	+	6½	1.9 -7.7
51	24	Ilika♦	25¼			... -6.4
138	56	Ingenta♦	67½	–	2	6.7 5.6
178	73	Intercede♦	118	+	2	... 20.7
28½	11¾	Iomart♦	12½	+	⅛	... -1.5
72⅛	4¾	IQE♦	47	+	3½	... -12.5
4453½	912⅜	LG Electronics	1460½	–	2½	1.7 ...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	64½			3.2 14.8
14½	2	Nanoco Group	2⅜	–	⅛	... -2.1
138	94⅛	Netcall♦	118			0.8 48.2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½			2.4 -1.7
60⅜	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	38¼	+	¼	8.5 -69.6
31	17	Pennant Intl♦	29			... -5.8
447	210	Playtech	367½	+	4	... 0.9
50	33½	Pulsar Group♦	35			... -4.5
570¼	398½	QinetiQ‡	553½	+	6½	2.0 27.5
117	88	RM	98	+	1	... 37.7
6½	2¾	Seeing Machines♦	4¾	+	⅛	... -11.1
69½	35½	Shearwater Group♦	61½	–	½	... -1.5
2004	1083	Softcat	1994	+	2	1.5 29.9
50	5	Sorted Group♯	9			... -0.2
1018½	553⅜	Tele Ericsson	750¼	–	7	3.1 11.3
1200	771⅜	**The Sage Grp**	1048½	+	21	2.1 27.8
91⅝	52½	Touchstar♦‡	82½	–	2	3.9 -6.2
435	280	Tracsis♦	310	–	12½	0.9 ...
400	230	Triad Group‡	395	+	5	2.3 39.8
330	210	Water Intel♦	307½			... 14.5
150	96⅜	Xaar	119	+	1	... -27.7
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	11½			... -4.1

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
436¼	206	**Airtel Africa**	329½	–	2½	1.6 23.9
242⅜	173	**BT Group**‡	199¼	–	¾	4.2 18.1
169½	106	Currys	162	+	1½	1.9 10.5
1186	687	Gamma Comms	988	+	20	2.2 14.2
247⅛	118	Helios Towers♯	202½	+	4½	0.9 73.9
0⅛	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛			... -3.4
1936	638	Telecom Plus‡	857	–	8	5.8 8.5
131⅛	82⅛	**Vodafone**	120½	+	1¼	3.3 -85.3

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
260	203⅜	Braemar‡	225	–	3	3.1 31.1
5485	3365	Clarkson	4840	–	150	2.4 22.6
683¾	332⅜	EasyJet	671	+	1	2.0 10.2
237⅛	152⅛	FirstGroup‡	183¼	+	¾	3.9 8.6
554	320	Fisher (James)	481	+	1	... -55.3
492⅝	332¾	**Intl Cons Air**	442½	–	3½	1.5 7.2
685	458	Irish Cont	665	–	10	2.1 16.7
38⅛	17	Mobico Group	25⅞	+	¾	... -1.1
7	1¾	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼			... -0.4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1095	–	15	... ...

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
220¼	151½	**Centrica**	154¼	+	½	3.7 -102.8
937½	613⅜	Drax Group	718	–	½	4.2 34.7
485	420	Jersey Electricity	440			5.0 12.3
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1200	+	4	4.0 18.3
606	439⅜	Pennon‡	469¾	+	5⅞	6.2 24.2
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3142	+	26	4.0 25.4
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2390	+	14	2.9 22.7
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1436	+	8	3.7 16.7

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

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ICE

Money

Wall Street

	Aug 7 midday	+/-
3M	182.62	+1.91
Abbott Labs	107.63	-0.33
AbbVie	244.45	+0.58
Accenture	173.35	+2.24
Adobe	265.53	+5.29
Aflac	124.09	-2.57
Agilent Techs	144.29	+2.95
Air Prods & Chm	301.87	+1.95
Allstate	269.37	-5.74
Alphabet Cl A	354.69	-3.06
Alphabet Cl C	353.61	-3.01
Altria	68.28	+0.53
Amazon	276.17	+3.91
Amer Elec Power	126.17	+0.91
Amer Express	339.68	-2.92
Amer Tower	173.57	+2.37
Ameren Corp	109.35	+1.08
American Int	78.84	-1.13
American Wtr W	135.86	+1.04
Ameriprise	551.64	-8.18
Ametek	251.93	+0.55
Amgen	406.43	+1.58
Amphenol	167.55	-3.06
Analog Devices	389.01	+11.70
Aon Corp	359.09	-1.66
Apple	311.71	-0.70
Applied Mats	537.31	+9.83
Archer Daniels	77.44	-0.07
Arthur J Gallagher	250.85	-0.89
AT&T	23.79	+0.07
Auto Data Proc	272.07	-1.44
Autodesk	248.56	+6.09
Autozone	3061.52	-8.10
AvalonBay	187.54	+0.99
Baker Hughes	62.47	-0.28
Ball Corp	63.37	+0.24
Bank NY Mellon	157.49	-1.33
Bank of America	62.91	-0.10
Baxter Intl	27.27	+0.26
Becton Dickinsn	175.77	-1.30
Berkshire Hath	519.83	-4.78
Best Buy	81.49	+1.47
BlackRock	1129.63	+0.33
Boeing	231.39	-0.80
Booking Holdings	214.20	+6.81
Boston Sci	49.52	+0.22
Bristol-Myers Sq	64.26	+0.11
Broadcom Ord	423.04	+2.47
Canadian Pacific Kansas	91.52	+1.27
Capital One Fin	216.80	-3.20
Cardinal Health	238.76	+1.10
Caterpillar	844.30	-12.66
Cencora	321.90	-3.11
Centene	65.63	+1.43
Chevron	187.22	-2.01
Church & Dwight	102.67	-0.69
Cigna Group	279.78	+4.53
Cincinnati Fin	178.26	-0.78
Cintas	203.10	+0.95
Cisco Systems	121.03	+0.15
Citigroup	134.06	+0.24
Citizens Financial	72.60	+0.17
Clorox Co	105.29	-0.31
CME	266.03	+1.71
CMS Energy	71.31	+0.11
Coca-Cola	86.99	+0.14
Cognizant Tech	57.25	+0.36
Colgate-Palm	92.90	-0.10
Comcast	25.34	+0.17
Conocophillips	118.31	+1.55
Consd Edison	108.55	-0.40
Constellation Brs	135.99	+3.47
Corning	165.78	+8.60
Costco Whole	945.68	-3.47
Crown Castle Int	76.24	+1.32
CSX	50.72	+0.02
Cummins	642.33	-1.65
CVS Health	95.41	-0.81
Danaher	202.04	+2.06
Deere&co	625.87	+11.03
Delta Air Lines	91.38	-0.60
Devon Energy	43.42	+0.31
Digital Realty Tr.	195.42	+2.86
Dollar General	126.77	-0.68
Dollar Tree	130.50	+0.82
Dominion Energy	67.43	+0.63
Dover	212.43	+1.59
Dow Inc	29.80	-0.50
D.R. Horton	147.96	+1.95
DTE Energy	141.06	+1.09
Duke Energy	125.15	+1.25
Eaton	449.30	+1.11
eBay	112.41	+2.27

	Aug 7 midday	+/-
Ecolab	284.07	+0.61
Edison Intl	68.81	+1.58
Edwards Life	89.37	+0.05
Eli Lilly	1176.96	-14.98
Emmerson Elec	158.12	+1.21
Entergy	108.09	+1.60
EOG Res	136.09	-0.11
Equifax	181.69	+5.90
Equinix	1054.94	+2.08
Essex Property	286.79	+1.67
Estee Lauder	87.63	+2.14
Evrsurce Engy	72.81	+0.75
Exelon	45.82	+0.50
Extra Space Stor	149.75	+0.21
ExxonMobil Hldgs	153.41	
Fastenal	51.21	+0.41
Fedex	318.53	+2.66
Fifth Third	57.10	+0.14
First Solar	254.00	+9.86
FirstEnergy	47.60	+0.23
FIS	42.36	-0.45
Ford Motor	13.98	+0.20
Freeport-Mcm	69.41	+1.23
Garmin	310.24	+8.37
GE Aerospace	368.86	-5.69
Gen Dynamics	388.95	+2.03
General Mills	36.42	+0.35
General Mtrs	87.23	+0.29
Genuine Parts	134.27	+1.48
Gilead Sciences	133.37	+2.51
Global Payments	85.30	-2.39
Goldman Sachs	1035.52	+2.94
Grainger (WW)	1280.17	-2.41
Halliburton	32.34	-0.17
Hartford Insurance	143.77	-0.74
HCA Healthcare	411.26	+2.37
Hershey	182.75	-0.27
Home Depot	352.28	+2.76
Honeywell Intl	245.11	
HP Ent	52.38	-0.05
HP Inc	29.23	+1.05
Humana	381.16	+13.92
Huntington	17.41	+0.06
IBM	235.42	+1.99
ICE Group	151.20	+1.45
IFF	84.68	+0.13
Illinois Tool	294.61	-0.09
Illumina	190.55	-3.17
Ingersoll-Rand	87.78	-0.46
Intel	100.80	+0.99
Intuit	330.13	+8.22
Intuitive Surg	377.18	+3.47
Iron Muntn	122.15	+0.19
Johnsn & Johnsn	256.63	-0.35
Johnson Controls	153.28	-1.27
JP Morgan Chase	356.85	+0.55
Kellanova		
Keurig Dr Pepper	30.04	-0.34
Kimberley-Clark	109.21	+0.55
Kinder Morgan	31.13	-0.15
KLA Corp	197.53	+4.31
Kroger	56.59	-0.73
L3 Harris	287.69	-1.84
Labcorp Hldgs	317.64	+1.11
Lam Research	308.21	+2.44
Lennar	86.62	+1.80
Lockheed Martin	583.65	+0.80
Lowes Co	221.72	+3.32
LyondellBasell	60.53	-0.91
Marathon Petrol	300.59	+1.34
Marriott Intl	357.50	-2.17
Marsh	191.81	-1.48
MartinMarietta	549.63	+11.35
MasterCard	564.60	-11.35
McCormick	52.94	+0.66
McDonald's	274.67	-1.59
McKesson	882.68	+11.30
Medtronic	86.13	+0.21
Merck & Co	128.42	+0.05
Meta Platforms	593.37	+3.47
Metlife	97.28	-2.67
Microchip	84.44	+10.08
Micron	865.04	-16.43
Microsoft	503.00	+3.14
Mondelez	62.80	+0.05
Monster Bvrge	89.53	-4.62
Moodys	477.09	+3.96
Morgan Stanley	213.95	+0.20
Motorala Sols	470.25	-3.82
M&T Bank Corp	250.58	+0.44
Nasdaq Inc	95.29	+0.59
Netapp	188.14	-3.34
Netflix	74.04	+0.35

	Aug 7 midday	+/-
Newmont Mining	112.70	+7.27
NextEra Energy	85.14	+0.54
Nike	41.84	-0.16
Norfolk Sthn	340.34	-2.12
Northrup Grum	568.50	+0.76
Nucor	271.45	-0.55
Nvidia	222.47	+3.48
Occidental Petr	56.32	+0.28
Omnicom	84.70	+2.19
ONEOK	87.96	+0.03
Oracle	145.75	+2.28
O'Reilly	92.94	-0.43
Paccar	131.46	-0.60
Parker-Hannifin	1079.73	+9.93
Paychex	120.12	-0.01
Paypal Hldngs	59.14	-0.64
PepsiCo	138.57	+0.14
Pfizer	26.42	+0.22
PG&E	17.50	+0.49
Philip Morris Intl	189.11	+1.06
Phillips66	205.11	-0.41
PNC Finl	252.09	-0.67
PPG Inds	118.67	+1.51
PPL	35.56	+0.94
Price T Rowe	113.22	-0.40
Procter & Gmbl	145.34	-1.63
Progressive Cp	215.07	-0.27
Prologis	140.13	+0.99
Prudential Finl	121.92	+0.42
Public Serv Ent	75.77	+0.73
Public Storage	327.78	+0.78
PulteGroup	130.86	+1.31
Qualcomm	165.61	+5.22
Quanta Services	671.14	+3.30
Realty Income	62.72	+0.36
Regeneron Pharm	781.35	+9.24
Regions Financial	31.47	+0.08
Republic Serv	215.98	+6.39
Rockwell Auto	441.48	-0.32
Roper Tech	400.66	+3.58
Ross Stores	154.25	-0.06
RTX Corp	221.96	-1.29
RylCaribbean	321.91	+1.36
Salesforce Inc	191.24	+4.47
Schwab (Charles)	106.76	-0.90
Seagate Tech	796.11	-56.84
Sempra	85.48	+1.13
Sherwin-Williams	367.30	+3.88
Simon Prop	222.82	+0.99
SLB	51.25	-0.29
Southern Co	93.38	+0.48
S&P Global	410.28	+5.04
Starbucks	106.59	+1.43
State Street	184.25	-0.67
Stryker	338.23	+0.80
Synchrony Fin	78.23	-0.44
Sysco	83.55	-0.80
Target	147.85	+0.77
Texas Insts	284.35	+5.95
TheKraftHeinz	25.20	+0.24
Thermo Fisher	585.23	+5.21
TJX	161.68	-0.38
Tractor Supply Co	34.15	+0.06
Transdigm Group	1224.57	-37.50
Travelers	385.98	-0.02
Truist Finl Corp	52.48	-0.11
Tyson Foods	58.65	+0.11
Union Pacific	295.96	+0.58
UnitedHealth	406.95	+2.98
Untd Rentals	1171.16	+8.50
UPS	104.75	+1.55
US Bancorp	63.88	+0.07
Valero Energy	300.52	-2.47
Ventas	93.03	+0.77
Verisk Analyts	193.03	+3.28
Verizon Comm	46.88	-0.12
Vertex Pharma	490.04	+6.01
Visa	364.24	-6.23
Vulcan Mats	285.10	+3.47
Walmart	111.48	-0.59
Walt Disney	104.72	+0.04
Waste Mgt	230.15	+1.14
Waters	403.59	+3.89
WEC Engy	108.30	+0.33
Wells Fargo	86.57	-1.02
Welltower	236.92	+0.92
Western Digital	431.54	-19.98
Weyerhaeuser	25.57	+0.12
Williams Cos	71.45	-0.31
Xcel Energy	78.01	+1.04
Xylem	120.99	+0.23
Yum Brands	151.46	-0.82
Zimmer	96.15	-1.04
Zoetis	73.37	-3.90

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	87.29	87.8	87.09	87.53		1331623
	26-Dec				87.47		1741
	27-Mar				87.37		
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.2525	96.2525	96.25	96.25		401827
	26-Sep	96.135	96.165	96.135	96.15		428271
	26-Dec	95.935	96	95.93	95.965		536126
	27-Mar	95.795	95.88	95.79	95.835		391890
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.74	95.83	95.73	95.78		384554
	27-Sep	95.73	95.815	95.72	95.77		242932
	27-Dec	95.745	95.83	95.74	95.79		294399
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.42	97.435	97.42	97.425		666575
	26-Dec	97.265	97.305	97.26	97.285		952477
	27-Mar	97.155	97.215	97.15	97.185		472111
	27-Jun	97.105	97.17	97.1	97.14		485355
	27-Sep	97.095	97.165	97.09	97.135		439888
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun	100.05	100.05	100.0475	100.05		70792
	26-Sep	100.045	100.045	100.04	100.045		75775
	26-Dec	99.99	100	99.985	99.995		52702
	27-Mar	99.905	99.915	99.89	99.905		34772
	27-Jun	99.82	99.835	99.805	99.825		25542
	27-Sep	99.75	99.775	99.735	99.755		27274
	27-Dec	99.695	99.72	99.68	99.7		21040
FTSE100	26-Sep	10866	10969.5	10850.5	10916		477243
	26-Dec	11025	11025	11025	10984		759
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8869	0	
	26-Dec				8914.6		

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Major indices

New York (midday)

Dow Jones	53958.99 (+73.89)
Nasdaq	26688.14 (+339.78)
S&P 500	7743.59 (+33.63)

Tokyo

Nikkei 225	65606.71 (-76.55)

Hong Kong

Hang Seng	25668.03 (+137.75)

Amsterdam

Amsterdam AEX	1111.47 (-1.00)

Sydney

Australia AO	9445.10 (-6.90)

Frankfurt

DAX	26319.45 (+179.32)

Singapore

Singapore Straits	5698.43 (+59.44)

Brussels

Brussels BEL20	5777.71 (+17.51)

Paris

Paris CAC	8714.93 (+15.22)

Zurich

Zurich SMI	14544.91 (+26.16)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6523.86 (+21.30)

London

FTSE100	10901.09 (+33.20)
FTSE250	24854.86 (+159.44)
FTSE350	5941.63 (+20.28)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5112.00 (+19.10)
FTSE All Share	5876.54 (+20.40)
FTSE Non Financials	6413.67 (nc)
TechMark Focus	9575.59 (-19.86)
US$	1.3489 (+0.0023)
Euro	1.1675 (+0.0001)
SDR	0.9866 (+0.0009)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

Commodities

Natural gas $

2.662	0.022

Light crude oil

78.15	+0.85

Crude oils ($/barrel FOB)

WTI SEP 26	78.17	0.85
WTI OCT 26	77.86	0.91
WTI NOV 26	75.87	0.8
WTI DEC 26	74.6	0.86
WTI JAN 27	73.47	0.7

Products

Fuel Oil	464.643	16.305
Euro Naphtha	702.68	33.914

ICE futures

Gas oil

Aug	1199.25-1198.75	Dec	1004-1003.5
Sep	1139.5-1139	Jan	972.75-972.25
Oct	1099.5-1099.25		
Nov	1052-1051.75	Volume: 163242	

Brent

Oct	83.48-83.46	Jan	78.63-78.6
Nov	81.64-81.62	Feb	77.6-77.58
Dec	79.99-79.97	Volume: 587141	

Cocoa

Sep	4010 +202	Sep	4122 +187
Dec	4067 +195	Dec	4095 +186
Mar	4152 +192	Mar	4152 +192
May	4145 +197	May	4145 +197
Jul	4153 +190	Volume: 45999	

Robusta coffee

Sep	3784 +2	May	3687 +12
Nov	3772 +11	Jul	3671 +15
Jan	3745 +17		
May	3687 +12	Volume: 29253	

White sugar

Oct	462.5 +5.6	Aug	462.6 +5.6
Dec	462.7 +6.1	Oct	461.7 +5.5
May	465.2 +6		
May	465.2 +6	Volume: 25529	

London grain futures

Liffe wheat (close £/t)

Nov	197 -2.75	May	204 -3
Jan	202.5	Jul	209.25
Mar	204.75	Volume: 11674	

London Metal Exchange (Official)

Cash	3Mth	26-Sep
Copper		
+33.36	-41.5	-23.61
Lead		
+3.58	+2.5	+0.46
Zinc		
-44.17	-57.5	-48.39
Aluminium		
+19.49	+18.5	+20.12
Nickel		
+239.75	+253	+239.61
Nickel		
-569.5	-665	-572

Eurotop 100

	Close	+/-	12mthhigh	12mthlow	Yield	P/E
ABB Ltd S SF	81.76	+2.24	89.14	52.66	1.15	31.57
Air Liquide Fr	172.38	+1.66	189.80	154.86	1.95	33.03
Airbus Fr	213.60	+11.40	221.30	157.42	1.50	39.85
Allianz G	433.50	+1.00	443.90	338.80	3.94	15.15
Anglo American UK GBP	40.22	+2.89	42.39	21.04	0.72	-16.40
Anheuser-Busch InBev B	72.86	-2.34	76.18	48.87	1.10	27.49
AP Moller-Maersk A Dn KR	16590.00	-310.00	18320.00	11870.00	2.89	42.87
AP Moller-Maersk B Dn KR	17110.00	-295.00	18865.00	11840.00	2.81	44.21
Arcelor Mittal	62.98	+2.24	65.24	27.13	0.82	37.05
ASML Holding NI	1499.00	+64.80	1741.00	600.00	0.52	75.29
AstraZeneca UK GBP	118.96	+7.36	157.32	98.92	2.01	24.31
Atlas Copco A Sw Kr	209.60	+8.50	212.20	143.60	1.43	38.60
Atlas Copco B Sw Kr	182.55	+6.70	185.20	127.00	1.64	33.62
AXA Fr	45.05	+0.11	45.66	36.55	5.15	12.55
Banco Santander Es	12.86	+0.54	13.03	7.62	1.51	14.13
Barclays UK GBP	5.16	+0.07	5.54	3.53	2.23	11.78
BASF G	51.50	+1.10	55.05	41.48	4.37	28.30
Bayer G	49.81	+1.76	53.92	24.92	0.22	13.54
BBVA Es	24.60	+0.40	24.91	15.28	3.03	94.62
BHP Group UK GBP	33.46	+2.12	34.95	19.18	3.06	25.38
BMW G	59.78	+0.48	97.92	56.40	7.36	5.03
BNP Paribas Fr	112.44	+2.78	113.62	65.12	4.59	11.75
BP UK GBP	5.17	-0.35	6.09	3.99	4.82	
Brit Amer Tobacco GBP	44.21	-1.49	53.26	36.77	5.54	12.60
BT Group UK GBP	1.99	-0.02	2.42	1.73	4.17	18.12
Centrica UK GBP	1.54	-0.01	2.20	1.51	3.68	-102.83
Christian Dior Fr	435.80	+2.20	611.50	414.80	3.28	15.10
Compagnie de Saint Gobain	85.44	+4.16	100.75	65.88	2.69	12.75
Danone Fr	68.22	+0.70	80.14	60.64	3.30	26.34
Deutsche Bank G	32.89	+1.01	34.26	23.82	3.04	10.41
Deutsche Telekom G	29.04	+2.28	34.36	23.53	3.44	14.74
Diageo UK GBP	17.90	+1.55	21.42	12.96	2.07	30.91
Enel It	10.04	+0.24	10.31	7.69	4.88	27.15
Engie (FR)	26.72	-0.39	29.89	17.20	3.86	17.58
Eni	23.28	-0.70	25.02	14.48	4.73	16.51
EON G	19.02	+0.31	20.39	14.60	3.00	28.83
Fresenius Medical Care Ag & Co	47.06	+2.54	52.96	35.11	2.23	60.33
GlaxoSmKline UK GBP	19.61	+0.29	22.82	12.89	3.57	13.89
Glencore Xstrata	5.66	+0.23	7.07	2.75	2.23	188.63
Heineken NV NI	77.14	-1.40	80.44	63.90	2.49	16.55
Henkel KgaA G	74.45	+3.35	77.25	57.85	2.75	25.41
Henkel KgaA Pref G	79.80	+4.18	84.20	61.28	2.59	14.97
Hermes Intl SCA Fr	1635.50	+104.00	2300.00	1465.50	1.10	37.23
HSBC UK GBP	15.29	-0.47	16.10	9.28	3.64	17.05
Iberdrola Es	20.70	+0.05	22.08	15.33	2.66	37.50
Imperial Tobacco UK GBP	27.91	-0.34	36.32	26.26	5.97	11.12
Inditex Es	58.66	+2.22	59.32	41.24	2.42	133.02
ING NI	30.49	+0.05	31.11	19.94	3.73	15.40
Intesa Sanpaolo It	6.82	+0.28	6.86	4.81	5.51	29.67
Linde G	489.23	+10.85	548.20	387.78	1.31	31.42
Lloyds Bank UK GBP	1.15	+0.00	1.18	0.77	3.48	16.45
L'Oreal Fr	385.90	-1.05	408.35	338.85	1.87	30.36
LVMH Fr	480.00	+4.85	654.70	440.00	2.71	21.96
Mercedez-Benz Group AG	47.09	+0.35	62.34	42.62	7.43	4.62
Munich Re G	515.40	-6.80	611.80	437.40	4.66	24.61
National Grid GBP	12.00	+0.10	14.29	10.00	4.04	18.32
Nestle S SF	81.21	+0.20	87.09	70.29	3.82	23.14
Novartis S SF	125.98	-0.62	131.50	91.56	2.94	41.30
Orange	16.45	-0.12	18.80	13.07	4.80	20.07
Pernod Ricard NV Fr	70.32	+2.50	107.45	58.60	6.68	10.95
Phillips Elect NI	23.13	+0.39	27.70	20.90	3.67	46.26
Prudential UK GBP	10.45	-0.71	12.38	9.10	1.88	9.14
Reckitt Benckiser UK GBP	53.06	+0.66	65.23	36.64	4.08	11.33
Richemont S SF	195.45	+4.55	198.90	127.20	1.69	41.68
Rio Tinto UK GBP	75.28	+3.54	91.17	44.37	4.58	16.55
Rolls-Royce UK GBP	15.30	+0.62	15.86	9.90	0.72	22.04
RWE AG	56.22	-0.96	62.00	33.72	2.13	22.67
Sanofi Aventis Fr	75.31	+0.84	91.15	71.25	5.47	9.62
SAP G	177.96	+20.28	257.70	127.50	1.40	28.98
Schneider Electric Fr	303.70	+14.10	303.50	208.80	1.38	35.36
Shell	33.15	-0.69	37.59	25.54	4.56	10.94
Siemens G	279.80	-2.85	291.50	198.00	1.91	26.57
Standard Chartered UK GBP	22.19	+0.31	22.78	12.85	2.32	15.32
Swatch Gp BR S SF	189.05	+8.75	223.10	133.10	2.38	50.55
Swiss Re AG S SF	138.50	+3.65	156.80	114.05	4.55	10.61
Telefonica Es	3.67	+0.09	4.89	3.24	6.62	2.43
Tenaris SA It	23.14	-1.80	27.82	14.54	4.45	6.97
Tesco UK GBP	4.75	-0.14	5.10	4.07	3.05	17.28
TotalEnergies	74.09	-2.33	81.34	49.24	4.72	10.75
UBS SA SF	43.46	+0.91	44.44	28.25	1.97	22.17
Vinci	125.35	+2.80	143.15	112.40	4.03	14.49
Vivendi	1.72	+0.12	3.30	1.56	2.33	15.64
Vodafone UK GBP	1.21	+0.03	1.31	0.82	3.29	-85.26
Volkswagen G	76.32	+1.66	109.15	69.20	6.89	5.74
Volvo B Sw Kr	355.60	-8.70	374.50	244.90	3.66	20.99
Zurich Fin S SF	593.20	-22.60	626.00	521.00	5.06	18.55

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%

ECB Refi 2.40%

Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%

Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7275	8.7272	-150.066	-426.212
Euro	1.1671	1.1670	-14.97	-42.7
Montreal	1.8805	1.8842	-25.22	-77.48
New York	1.3496	1.3451	-0.51	-0.49
Oslo	12.8076	12.8343	42.94	152.97
Tokyo	212.5560	213.1130	-55.72	-154.02
Zurich	1.0900	1.0927	-36.78	-111.7

FTSE volumes

(000s)

3i Group	1,309	InterCont'l Hotels	757
Aberdeen Group	5,424	Intertek Group	2,628
AB Foods	540	Intl Cons Airlines	6,174
Admiral	651	Investec	1,657
Airtel Africa	5,026	JD Sports	16,873
Alliance Witan	582	Kingfisher	3,094
Ang Am	3,306	Land Sec	2,311
Antofagasta	1,156	Legal & Gen	18,400
AstraZeneca	12,677	Lion Finance	94
Autotrader Group	1,907	Lloyds Bkg Gp	212,351
Aviva	7,857	LondonMetric	5,958
Babcock Intl	928	Lon Stock Ex	2,165
BAE Sys	4,398	M&G	7,016
Barclays	26,833	Marks & Spen	11,042
Barratt Redrow	8,270	Melrose Ind	2,216
Beazley	2,259	Metlen Energy	264
BP	129,847	Natl Grid	13,133
Brit. Amer. Tob	2,295	NatWest Group	10,114
British Land	4,243	Next	427
BT Group	13,685	Pearson	4,849
Bunzl	998	Pershing Square	156
Burberry	3,956	Persimmon	2,315
Centrica	18,077	Polar CapTech	2,591
Coca-Cola Europac	240	Prudential	13,234
Coca-Cola HBC	627	Reckitt Benck	1,887
Compass	3,426	RELX	13,602
Computacenter	356	Rentokil Initial	11,165
ConvaTec	9,543	Rio Tinto	9,732
Croda	977	Rolls-Royce	10,788
DCC Energy	200	Sainsbury	4,704
Diageo	15,307	Schroders	8,712
Diploma	412	Scot Mort Inv Tst	1,556
Endeavour	1,060	Segro	3,984
Entain	5,383	Severn Trent	621
Experian	6,423	Shell	10,116
F&C Inv Trust	5,053	Smith & Nephew	4,980
Fresnillo	5,197	Smiths Gp	1,455
Games Workshop	161	Spirax Group	414
Glencore	23,743	SSE	3,404
GSK	4,447	Standard Chart	24,264
Haleon	19,877	Standard Life	1,504
Halma	476	St James's Place	6,694
Hiscox	7,083	Tesco	13,554
Howden Joinery	629	The Sage Grp	2,666
HSBC	100,547	Tritax Big Box	10,322
ICG	800	Unilever	3,107
IG Group	1,429	Utd. Utilities	1,338
IMI	597	Vodafone	137,302
Imperial Brands	1,005	Weir Group	943
Informa	9,924	Whitbread	390

Gold/precious metals

Bullion: Open $4239.55

Close $4341.425 **High** $4371.89

Low $4229.75

AM $4301.85 **PM** $4335.55

Platinum $1747.9

Silver $63.3241

Palladium $1373.732

Dollar rates

Australia	1.41550-1.41630
Canada	1.39354-1.39363
Denmark	6.46740-6.46827
Euro	0.86500-0.86540
Hong Kong	7.84553-7.84591
Japan	157.50301-157.50999
Malaysia	4.00800-4.09400
Norway	9.49110-9.49380
Singapore	1.27843-1.27850
Sweden	9.47385-9.47653
Switzerland	0.80775-0.80779

Other Sterling

Argentine peso	2022.67749-2022.67944
Australian dollar	1.91062-1.91082
Bahrain dinar	0.50780-0.50980
Brazilian real	6.86650-6.86850
Euro	1.16710-1.16790
Hong Kong dollar	10.58700-10.59100
Indian rupee	128.42030-128.50031
Indonesian rupiah	24151.92969-24191.92969
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41570-0.41770
Malaysian ringgit	5.51910-5.52110
New Zealand dollar	2.29092-2.29152
Singaporean dollar	1.72496-1.72581
South African rand	21.82694-21.83800
UAE dirham	4.95650-4.95850

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91062 (-0.00209)
Canada $	1.8805 (-0.00373)
Denmark Kr	8.72746 (+0.00076)
Euro	1.1671 (-0.0003)
Hong Kong $	10.587 (+0.039)
Hungary	424.33

Unit-linked insurance investments

ABBEY LIFE
01202 292373
80 Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth BH8 8AL

	Sell	Buy	Weekly +/-	Yld %
American Ser 4	6254,20	6583,40	+197,40	...
Custodian S4	683,20	719,20	+3,40	...
Equity Ser 4	1172,80	1234,50	+2,50	...
Ethical S4	524,10	551,70	-0,20	...
European S4	1432,00	1507,40	+17,00	...
Fixed Int Ser 4	798,70	840,80	+4,20	...
High Inc Ser 4	3608,50	3798,40	+3,70	...
International S4	1268,20	1334,90	+29,20	...
Japan Ser 4	835,60	879,60	+23,60	...
Man Ser 4	3123,20	3287,60	+35,60	...
Money Ser 4	583,40	614,10	+0,30	...
Prop Fd Ser 4	985,90	1037,80	+4,60	...

Formerly Hill Samuel Life Assurance Ltd

Equity Fund	4598,60	4866,20	+77,70	...
European Fund	7542,70	7981,70	+90,10	...
Fixed Intl	894,20	946,00	+4,70	...
Income Fund	3923,20	4151,60	-4,80	...
International	3448,70	3649,40	+79,40	...
Managed Series A	2961,20	3133,60	+30,90	...
Managed Units	5447,70	5734,40	+57,20	...
Money Series A	533,60	564,60	+0,30	...
Money Units	759,50	799,50	+0,50	...
Property Series A	1371,50	1451,40	+6,40	...
Property Units	2965,90	2700,90	+12,30	...
Smaller Cos	2978,70	3152,00	+65,30	...

Formerly Target Life Assurance Co Ltd

Deposit	392,50	413,10	+0,20	...
Financial Ser 1	428,20	450,70	+7,40	...
Fixed Interest	592,00	623,20	+3,10	...
Managed	2870,90	3022,00	+29,70	...
Mngd Growth	1247,10	1312,70	+21,20	...
Property	803,10	845,40	+3,70	...
TSB Intl	2421,50	2548,90	+55,60	...

AEGON SCOTTISH EQUITABLE
08456 100010
Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh EH12 9SE

American	3289,19	3462,31	+102,31	...
Cash	306,02	322,13	+0,11	...
Distribution	106,96	112,59	+0,97	...
Ethical	806,18	848,62	+12,97	...
European	1908,99	2009,47	+26,05	...
Fixed Interest	506,59	533,25	+3,56	...
Global	545,78	574,50	+9,96	...
International	1649,21	1736,01	+30,36	...
Japan	692,24	728,68	+15,40	...
Mixed	1230,98	1295,77	+13,70	...
Pacific	2657,28	2586,61	-5,61	...
Technology	11018,70	11598,60	+613,20	...
UK Equity	1203,82	1267,18	+2,22	...

ALBA LIFE
50 Bothwell St, Glasgow G2 6HR
0141 248 2000
Formerly Britannia Life

European	2408,30	2535,10	+58,70	...
Far East	896,00	943,20	+10,30	...
Fixed Interest	817,30	860,30	+4,40	...
International	2235,60	2353,30	+43,60	...
Japan	1105,60	1163,80	+31,30	...
Managed Fund	2024,50	2131,00	+26,70	...
Money Market	443,80	467,20	+0,20	...
North America	2333,50	2456,30	+73,40	...
Property	956,90	1007,20	-1,50	...
UK Equity	4034,00	4246,40	+34,60	...

Pensions

Equity	2948,60	3103,80	+22,20	...
European	3172,60	3339,60	+76,70	...
Far Eastern	772,30	813,00	+9,70	...
Fixed Interest	846,50	891,00	+5,70	...
International	2062,80	2171,30	+44,10	...
Japan	573,40	603,50	+17,70	...
Managed	1500,00	1579,00	+20,60	...
Money Market	542,30	570,80	+0,40	...
North America	3705,90	3901,00	+129,80	...
Property	905,30	953,00	-0,60	...

AXA SUN LIFE
PO Box 1810, Bristol BS99 5SN
AXA Assurance-02476 236600
Sun Life-0117 989 3000
AXA Equity & Law-02476 235400
Life Assence-AXA Equity & Law Series 6.1% AMC

Balced Ser 6	3424,50	3604,70	+48,50	...
Europe Ser 6	2766,80	2912,50	+52,00	...
UK Equities Ser 6	5734,50	6036,30	+25,40	...

Life Funds-Sun Life (Inc Birmingham Midshires) & AXA Assurance 1% AMC

Cash Acc	524,40	552,00	+0,50	...
Distribution Fund	382,10	402,20	+3,50	...
Equity Acc	8386,30	8827,70	+37,00	...
European	1306,70	1375,40	+24,60	...
Far Eastern Acc	3289,10	3462,20	+107,70	...
Fixed Int Acc	977,70	1029,10	+5,80	...
Global Eqty Acc	3966,00	4174,70	+146,50	...
Japan Acc	509,00	535,80	+14,30	...
Managed Acc	4197,50	4418,50	+59,30	...
North Amer Acc	4982,80	5245,00	+215,70	...
Pacific Acc	2546,70	2680,20	+88,70	...
Property Acc	1225,10	1289,60	+1,30	...

BARCLAYS LIFE ASSURANCE CO LTD
0845 603 5000
Level 12, 1 Churchill Place, London E14 5HP

500 Accum	2133,28	2245,56	+8,87	...
America Acc	4651,39	4896,20	+144,87	...
Comb Inc Acc	3757,12	3954,86	+57,36	...
Equity Acc	5696,58	5996,40	+24,61	...
Far East Growth	2322,41	2444,64	+146,08	...
Gilt 2 Init	187,38	197,25	+0,86	...
Gilt Edged Acc	854,02	898,97	+4,52	...
Inter 2 Init	689,67	725,97	+19,76	...
International Acc	3141,06	3306,38	+92,02	...
Japan Acc	679,77	715,55	+18,51	...
Managed 2 Init	683,71	719,69	+9,99	...
Managed Acc	3103,39	3266,72	+47,38	...
Managed Alpha	2438,77	2567,13	+10,14	...
Money Acc	486,63	512,24	-0,06	...
Prop 2 Init	218,66	230,17	+0,19	...
Property Acc	990,38	1042,51	+1,52	...
UK Growth Acc	1800,25	1895,00	+7,70	...
Univ Tech Acc	1371,09	1443,26	+40,16	...

& AXA Assurance 1% AM

Equity 2 Init	1247,36	1313,01	+4,55	...

CANADA LIFE
01707 651122
2-6 High Street, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 5BA

Deposit Fund	578,70	609,10	...	...
Equity Fund	4057,20	4270,20	...	...
European	2512,00	2644,00	...	...
Fixed Interest	951,00	1001,00	...	...
International	3669,00	3862,00	...	...
Intl Mngd	5127,00	5396,00	...	...
Japanese	551,40	580,40	...	...
Managed Fund	3470,00	3652,00	...	...
Money	602,30	633,00	...	...
Multiple Inv	4663,00	4703,00	...	...
North Amer	3443,00	3624,00	...	...
Property Fund	1789,00	1883,00	...	...
UK Equity	6410,00	6747,00	...	...
UK Property	1265,00	1331,00	...	...

CLERICAL MEDICAL INVESTMENT GROUP
Narrow Plain, Bristol BS2 0JH 0117 9290566
Life Funds

Cash	325,70	342,80	+0,20	...
Bst Acc S2	239,00	239,00	+0,80	...
Fidelity Bal	1494,60	1573,20	+13,10	...
Gilt & Fixed Int	523,10	550,60	+1,40	...
Non Equ	431,70	454,30	+0,70	...
Nth American	5007,30	5270,80	+94,60	...
Property	749,80	789,20	-9,50	...
UK Gwth	1963,50	2066,70	+17,80	...
With Prof Bd S2	127,60	127,60	+0,10	...
With Profits Flex	135,30	135,30	+0,10	...
With Profits Reg	434,80	457,70	+0,20	...

Pension Funds

Cash	383,10	403,20	+0,30	...
European	3215,70	3384,90	+77,10	...
Gilt & Fixed Int	603,30	635,00	+2,20	...
Halifax	149,20	157,10	+0,10	...
Nth American	8362,70	8802,80	+200,50	...
PP Bal Pens	1571,80	1654,50	+18,20	...
PP Caut Pens	461,50	485,70	+1,10	...
PP UK Gth Pens	1838,10	1912,70	+11,50	...
PP UK Prop Pens	840,00	884,20	-9,50	...
With Profits Reg	836,60	880,70	+0,60	...
With Profits Spec	828,80	872,50	+0,60	...

COUNTRYWIDE ASSURED
Harbour House, Portwat, Preston, Lancs PR2 2PR
CA Funds 0800 262536

Deposit Life	247,40	260,40	+0,10	...
Deposit Pen	354,20	372,60	+0,30	...
Intl Life	1581,60	1664,20	+58,30	...
Intl Pen	2329,90	2452,50	+101,40	...
Mod Life	1103,10	1161,10	+21,40	...
Mod Pen	1648,10	1734,80	+34,60	...
UK Eqty Life	1191,90	1254,60	+1,30	...
UK Eqty Pen	1579,90	1663,00	+2,20	...

CWA Series Funds 0870 600 0014

Equity Fd	2505,90	2637,80	-6,80	...
Glob Cash	403,20	424,40	+0,30	...
Glob Eqty	5494,20	5783,40	+156,10	...
Glob Fxd Int	1373,40	1445,70	+5,00	...
Glob Mgd	3250,40	3421,50	+43,20	...
Glob Prop	699,60	736,40	-4,60	...
Managed Fd	4061,20	4275,70	+54,10	...
Property Fd	575,10	605,40	-3,80	...

FRIENDS PROVIDENT
01222 413366
Castle Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 3SH

Cash	358,70	377,60	+0,20	...
European	1809,00	1904,20	+34,20	...
Fixed Inter Life	704,50	741,60	+4,10	...
Index Linked	542,60	571,20	+5,00	...
Managed	1494,30	1573,00	+25,20	...
North American	1977,30	2081,30	+84,90	...
Overseas Equity	2748,90	2893,60	+101,70	...
Pacific Basin	846,30	890,80	+27,90	...
Property	763,30	803,50	+0,40	...
Stewardship	2400,10	2526,50	+13,60	...
UK Equity	2448,50	2577,40	-9,70	...

Formerly London & Manchester Assurance

Equity Ex Cap ‡	438,60	...	-1,70	...
Equity Life ‡	2560,60	...	-10,10	...
Fixed Interest ‡	729,30	...	+4,20	...
Fxd Int Ex Cap ‡	128,40	...	+0,70	...
Gtd Dep Ex Cap ‡	62,40	...	...	...
Guaranteed Deposit ‡	469,50	...	+0,40	...
Inter Life ‡	2653,00	...	+98,10	...
Intl Ex Cap ‡	461,90	...	+17,10	...
Prop Ex Cap ‡	116,20	...	...	...
Prop Life ‡	657,10	...	+0,40	...

FP Life Assurance Ex NM

American	5265,10	5542,20	+225,10	...
Deposit	595,40	626,80	+0,30	...
European	4565,60	4595,30	+82,80	...
Fixed Interest	1650,30	1535,70	+8,40	...
Income Acc	6362,80	6697,70	+48,20	...
Income Dist	953,60	1003,80	+7,20	...
International	2708,10	2850,60	+100,00	...
Managed	3311,30	3485,50	+57,00	...
Property	2132,60	2244,80	+1,10	...
Singapore & Mal	1902,40	2002,60	+66,60	...
Tokyo Fund	1549,60	1631,20	+42,80	...
UK Equity	3356,80	3533,50	-13,50	...

Friends Prov (London & Manchester) Ass Ltd Fd

Flexible Acc ‡	2138,10	...	+36,90	...
Flexible Cap ‡	369,50	...	+6,40	...
Inv Trust Acc ‡	5851,40	...	+178,90	...
Inv Trust Cap ‡	983,00	...	+30,10	...

GUARDIAN
01253 733151
Ballam Road, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 4JZ

Deposit	497,10	523,20	...	...
Equity Life	6834,90	7194,70	+29,10	...
European	1140,30	1200,30	+34,60	...
Fixed Interest	1739,00	1830,60	+10,40	...
Index Linked	657,00	691,60	+4,00	...
Inter Life	4556,90	4796,70	+138,40	...
Managed Life	3821,60	4022,70	+50,20	...
North American	2341,50	2464,80	+71,10	...
Pacific	1413,60	1488,00	+42,90	...
Prop Life	1451,90	1528,30	+22,20	...

HALIFAX LIFE LTD
PO Box 285, York Y01 1YB 01904 611110
Life Funds

Balanced	127,96	134,69	+1,30	...
Foundation	137,89	145,14	+1,60	...
Opportunity	176,33	185,61	+2,73	...

Pension Funds

Balanced S2	140,32	147,70	+1,86	1,00	
Foundation S2	148,08	155,87	+2,20	1,00	
Opportunity S2	192,49	202,62	+3,67	1,00	

LEGAL & GENERAL INVESTMENT MGMT
0203 1243000
One Coleman Street, EC2R 5AA

British Opp	1156,90	1217,80	-3,60	...
Cash	404,20	425,50	+0,20	...
Equity	7120,20	7494,90	+31,40	...
Fixed Interest	1356,80	1428,20	+6,50	...
Index Linked Gilt	590,70	621,80	+4,30	...
International	3914,00	4120,00	+132,00	...
Life Property	1560,90	1643,10	+0,70	...
Managed	4176,70	4396,50	+83,20	...

LINCOLN FINANCIAL GROUP
Barnett Way, Barnwood, Gloucester, GL4 3RZ
01452 371371 For Further prices 0800 7315139
Life

Balanced Mgd 3	2070,60	2179,50	+36,00	...
European	1200,90	1264,10	+11,70	...
Far Eastern	2594,30	2730,80	+139,80	...
Green	795,20	837,00	+15,20	...
International	914,40	962,50	+28,50	...
Japan	398,80	419,70	+20,80	...
North Amer	6520,80	6863,90	+256,30	...
UK Equity Gwth	2026,00	2974,70	-14,80	...

Pension

Balanced Mgd 3	4970,30	5231,80	+108,50	...
European	2035,20	2142,30	+34,30	...
Far Eastern	4399,90	4631,40	+254,40	...
Green	1358,40	1429,20	+31,70	...
International	1466,90	1543,10	+56,70	...
Japan	529,60	557,40	+26,30	...
North Amer	20934,80	22036,60	+1022,10	...
UK Eqty Gwth	5266,70	5543,20	-10,20	...
UK Fxd Int	1138,50	1198,40	+7,80	...

LLOYDS TSB LIFE LTD
01634 834000
Mountbatten Hse, Chatham, Kent
Life Funds

Equity	2397,70	2523,90	+35,00	...
Managed	5011,70	5011,70	+63,20	...
Income	5166,60	5438,50	+17,30	...
Managed Inv	2557,70	2692,30	+32,00	...

Life Funds-Series Two Current Series

American	5488,20	5777,10	+109,60	...
Balanced ‡	787,00	...	+4,00	...
Cash	455,80	479,80	+0,20	...
European Gth	1283,80	1350,90	+25,30	...
Fixed Interest	738,30	777,10	+1,50	...
German Growth	2466,10	2589,60	+69,50	...
Income	4731,70	4980,20	+15,60	...
Japan Growth	483,50	509,00	+9,50	...
Managed Inv	2806,20	2953,90	+35,20	...
Pacific Basin	2029,70	2136,50	+39,50	...
Property	1758,30	1850,90	-19,90	...
Smlr Cos Recov	6821,40	7180,40	+22,90	...
Worldwide Gth	3206,60	3375,40	+63,80	...

Pension Funds

American Pens	3652,90	3845,10	+84,80	...
Cash Pen	354,60	373,30	+0,20	...
European Pen	2550,00	2684,20	+59,20	...
Far East Pen	922,10	970,60	+21,40	...
Fixed Int Pen	525,70	553,40	+1,40	...
FTSE 100	615,70	648,10	+4,30	...
Managed Pen	1472,40	1549,90	+23,30	...
Property Pen	1102,80	1160,90	-12,50	...
UK Equity Pen	1221,70	1286,00	+5,30	...

LONDON LIFE
0117 984 7777
Spectrum Bond Street, Bristol, BS1 3AL

Deposit	570,70	570,70	+0,40	...
Deposit P	794,30	794,30	+0,50	...
Equity	5925,30	5925,30	+66,30	...
Equity A	1310,00	1379,20	+14,00	...
Equity P	5402,10	5402,10	+71,50	...
Fixed Int A	495,50	521,60	+2,50	...
Fixed Int P	1801,50	1801,50	+11,60	...
Fixed Interest	1171,30	1171,30	+6,10	...
Index Stock A	480,80	505,30	+4,00	...
Index Stock P	789,40	789,40	+8,30	...
Indexed Stock	642,90	642,90	+5,40	...
International	2341,10	2341,10	+50,00	...
International A	1394,70	1468,20	+29,70	...
International P	3269,60	3269,60	+76,30	...
Mixed	3340,00	3340,00	+80,70	...
Mixed A	1046,70	1101,80	+12,70	...
Mixed P	3407,60	3407,60	+84,10	...
Property	872,80	872,80	+0,50	...
Property A	372,60	392,30	+0,20	...
Property P	729,60	729,60	+0,60	...

MERCHANT INVESTORS ASSURANCE CO LTD
St Bartholomews House, Lewins Mead
Bristol BS1 2NH

Far East	1135,50	1195,30	+28,70	...
Gilt Edged	1324,50	1394,20	+4,50	...
Interest Fund	610,60	642,70	+0,20	...
Intl Equity	2909,10	3106,40	+67,20	...
Managed Fd	1464,10	1541,20	+15,40	...
North American	1231,10	1295,90	+41,40	...
Property	1626,20	1711,80	-18,00	...
UK Equity	1614,20	1699,20	+5,70	...

MGM ASSURANCE
MGM House, Heene Road, Worthing
BN11 2DY 01903 836000

Deposit Acc	418,98	441,03	+0,23	...
Fixed Interest Acc	1252,64	1318,56	+8,84	...
Managed Acc	2119,10	2230,65	+32,06	...
Property	250,20	263,30	...	...
Property Acc	911,36	959,95	-4,31	...

NAT WEST LIFE ASSCE LTD
PO Box 886, Trinity Quay, Bristol BS99 5LJ

Growth Mgd Pens	797,19	839,15	+13,18	...

NORWICH UNION LIFE INSURANCE
Society- Ex NUAM Funds
PO Box 140, Norwich NR3 1PP
01603 622200

Deposit Fund	692,50	728,95	+0,50	...
Equity Fund	23482,22	24718,75	+41,76	...
Fixed Int Fd	1660,84	1748,26	+8,79	...
Higher Inc Plus	254,06	267,43	+0,93	...
Intl Fund	1928,05	2029,53	+51,91	...
Managed Fund	8571,89	9023,04	+122,29	...
Property Fd	2684,01	2825,28	+1,48	...

Formerly Commercial Union

Cash	344,90	363,00	+0,20	...
Fxd Int	516,20	540,00	+2,70	...
Index-Lnkd	479,60	504,80	+4,60	...
Int Equity	2084,20	2194,50	+56,90	...
Property	1922,30	2023,70	+27,30	...
UK Equity	2787,10	2933,20	+4,70	...
Var Ann (5) ‡	413,90	...	+3,00	...
Var Ann Acc (5) ‡	8372,50	...	+90,00	...

Formerly General Accident

American	2472,20	2603,00	+73,20	...
Cash Deposit	292,30	307,70	+0,20	...
European Equity	1523,50	1603,70	+31,30	...
Fixed Int	434,00	456,80	+2,30	...
Index-Linked	465,60	490,10	+4,40	...
International	1363,50	1435,20	+31,40	...
Japan Equity	604,90	636,80	+19,80	...
Japan Smlr Cos	618,80	651,40	+20,30	...
Managed	971,60	1022,70	+13,80	...
Pacific Fund	1927,10	2028,50	+117,20	...
Property	690,80	689,00	+1,30	...
UK Equity	1599,60	1679,20	+2,60	...
Unitised Profit	464,60	489,10	+0,30	...

Formerly Provident Mutual

Deposit Initial	93,20	98,10	...	...
Deposit Ord	361,50	380,50	+0,20	...
Equity Init	1062,50	1118,40	+3,80	...
Equity Ord	4182,70	4402,90	+2,00	...
Fixed Int Init	170,20	179,20	+0,90	...
Fixed Int Ord	657,90	692,50	+3,40	...
I-Linked Gilt Init	168,00	176,80	+1,70	...
I-Linked Gilt Ord	588,20	619,20	+5,60	...
Managed Initial	590,60	621,70	+5,40	...
Managed Ord	2300,40	2421,50	+22,70	...
Oseas Equity Init	662,50	697,40	+17,80	...
Oseas Equity Ord	2720,00	2874,70	+73,30	...
Property Init	272,80	287,20	+0,10	...
Property Ord	1048,00	1103,10	+0,50	...

NPI
020 7477 5567
55 Moorgate, London EC2

Americas	4127,30	4344,60	+102,30	...
Deposit	401,30	422,50	+0,20	...
Far East	2855,00	3005,20	+34,50	...
Fixed Interest	952,20	1002,80	+4,90	...
Indexed Gilt	613,80	645,70	+5,10	...
Managed	2279,30	2399,30	+26,90	...
Overseas Equity	3714,70	3910,30	+73,70	...
UK Equity	3505,60	3690,20	+42,20	...

PEARL
The Pearl Centre, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6FY 01733 470 470

Inv Equity	8703,30	9161,40	+85,90	...
Inv Managed	5275,10	5552,80	+61,20	...
Inv Prop Ac Grs	999,20	1051,80	+0,80	...
Inv Prop Dist	316,20	332,90	+0,30	...
Ret Managed	6433,30	6771,90	+85,50	...

PHOENIX LIFE LTD
Edward Pavilion, Liverpool L3 4SL 0151 239 3000
For further fund prices please ring: 0800 731 2031
Lifestyle Bond Funds (Post 29/01/01)

Cautious Mgd ‡	325,90	...	+2,40	...
Deposit ‡	173,70	...	+0,20	...
Equity ‡	420,10	...	+1,90	...
Equity Inc ‡	420,10	...	+0,60	...
European ‡	547,00	...	+10,00	...
Far East ‡	619,60	...	+7,00	...
Fixed Int ‡	207,70	...	+1,10	...
FTSE All Share Tkr ‡	442,60	...	+1,00	...
Income Dist ‡	127,50	...	+0,50	...
Income Dist II ‡	127,60	...	+0,40	...
International ‡	507,40	...	+10,00	...
Japan Gth ‡	328,80	...	+9,10	...
Managed ‡	393,90	...	+4,20	...
North America ‡	796,90	...	+25,10	...
Pacific Gth ‡	905,50	...	+2,30	...
Property ‡	420,30	...	...	...
UK Leader ‡	427,50	...	+0,60	...
UK Smlr Cos ‡	361,30	...	+11,50	...
With Profits ‡	184,70	...	+0,21	...

Other Life & Pension Funds

Pens Unit W Prof	301,95	317,85	+0,39	...
With Profits Bd	224,41	224,41	+0,23	...

Pensions Solution Funds (Post 6/4/2001)

Balanced Grth ‡	379,60	...	+2,90	...
Cash Deposit ‡	190,00	...	+0,20	...
Equity ‡	449,80	...	+0,20	...
Equity Inc ‡	461,30	...	+0,80	...
European ‡	675,20	...	+11,40	...
Far East ‡	793,80	...	+9,70	...
Fixed Int ‡	234,60	...	+1,60	...
FTSE All Share Tkr ‡	536,60	...	+1,60	...
Index Linked ‡	253,20	...	+2,70	...
International ‡	692,30	...	+15,70	...
Managed Grth ‡	492,10	...	+5,10	...
Pens Protector ‡	197,70	...	+2,40	...
Property ‡	565,70	...	-0,10	...
UK Leader ‡	490,10	...	+0,80	...
Unitised W Prof ‡	256,19	...	+0,33	...

PRUDENTIAL INDIVIDUAL LIFE FUNDS
0345 601601
55 King's Road, Reading, RG1 3AH

Euro Fund	2817,10	2965,30	+29,60	...
N American Fd	2996,40	3154,10	+59,00	...

Scottish Amicable Life Fds (First Series)

Cash Fund	584,20	615,60	+0,10	...
Equity Fund	9238,80	9725,00	+118,50	...
Fixed Interest	1197,60	1260,60	+6,70	...
Intl Fund	4278,90	4504,10	+48,90	...
L&G UK Prop S2	113,90	119,90	+0,40	...
Managed Fund	4554,20	4583,80	+35,50	...

PRUDENTIAL LIFE FUNDS
01786 448844
PO Box 14962, Craigforth, Stirling, FK9 4ZD

BonusBond	378,20	398,10	+0,50	...
Prud Inher Bd (Cap) ‡	131,40	...	+0,20	...
Prud Inher Bd (Inc) ‡	97,80	...	+17,00	...

Scottish Amicable Life Fds (First Series)

Cash	414,40	436,20	+0,20	...
Equity	3632,10	3823,30	+46,70	...
Fixed Interest	887,20	933,90	+5,00	...
Index-Linked	517,10	544,30	+2,50	...
International	3084,00	3246,30	+35,40	...
L&G Prop S1	102,60	108,00	-0,30	...
Managed	2688,40	2829,90	+22,10	...

The M & G Series

Deposit Bond Acc	576,00	604,90	+0,10	...
Equity Bond Acc ‡	7386,20	7755,60	+93,30	...
European Bd Acc	2863,60	3006,80	+30,90	...
Extra Yld Bd Acc	6156,50	6464,40	-21,80	...
Gilt Bond Acc	954,80	1002,60	+5,40	...
High Yield Bond ‡	535,10	562,00	+2,40	...
International Bd	7630,10	8011,70	+94,00	...
Japan Bond Acc	791,80	831,50	+19,30	...
L&G Prop Acc	102,10	107,20	-0,30	...
Managed Bond Acc	4846,10	5088,50	+39,80	...

SAVE & PROSPER INSURANCE AND PENSIONS
St James's House, 27-43 Eastern Road, Romford RM1 3NH
Customer Helpline:0845 3000144

Bal Inv Fund	482,50	507,90	+9,20	...
Deposit Fund (2)	720,60	758,30	+0,50	...
Gilt Fund	1513,50	1593,20	+9,10	...
Global Equity Fd	2593,60	2688,00	+94,00	...
Property Fund (46)	253,70	267,10	-0,80	...

SCOTTISH LIFE INVESTMENTS
0131 225 2211
19 St Andrews Square, Edinburgh EH2 1YE

American	2913,40	3066,20	+74,40	...
Deposit	348,70	367,10	+0,20	...
European	4131,00	4348,50	+73,30	3,00
Fixed Interest	714,90	752,60	+3,60	...
Global Mod	2289,80	2410,40	+64,20	...
Index Linked	602,20	676,10	+3,80	...
Managed	1752,50	1844,80	+26,70	...
Pacific	1989,90	2094,70	+36,70	...
Property	869,10	914,90	+23,50	...
UK Equity	2463,60	2593,30	+15,40	...
Worldwide	712,20	749,70	+15,90	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL ASSURANCE
0141 248 6321
301 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5HN

Cash Fund	313,50	330,00	+0,20	...

RYOBI

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DIY BATTERY HEDGE TRIMMER

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4m REACH

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NO EXTENSION LEADS OR LADDERS REQUIRED

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RY18PP20PHT40A-120

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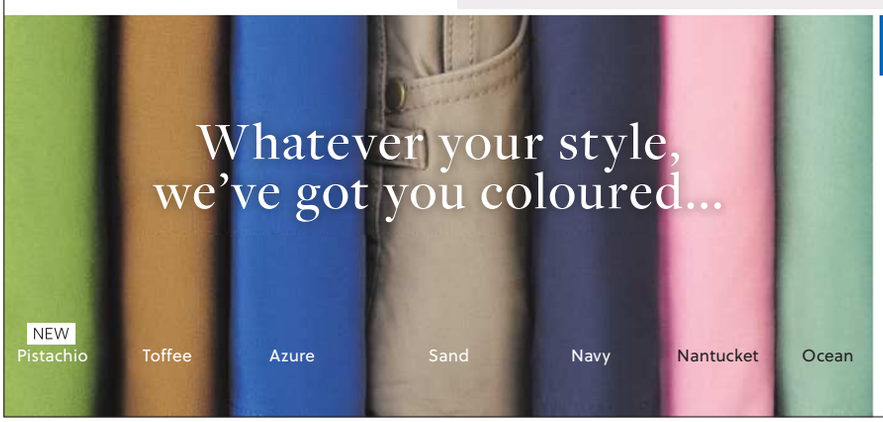

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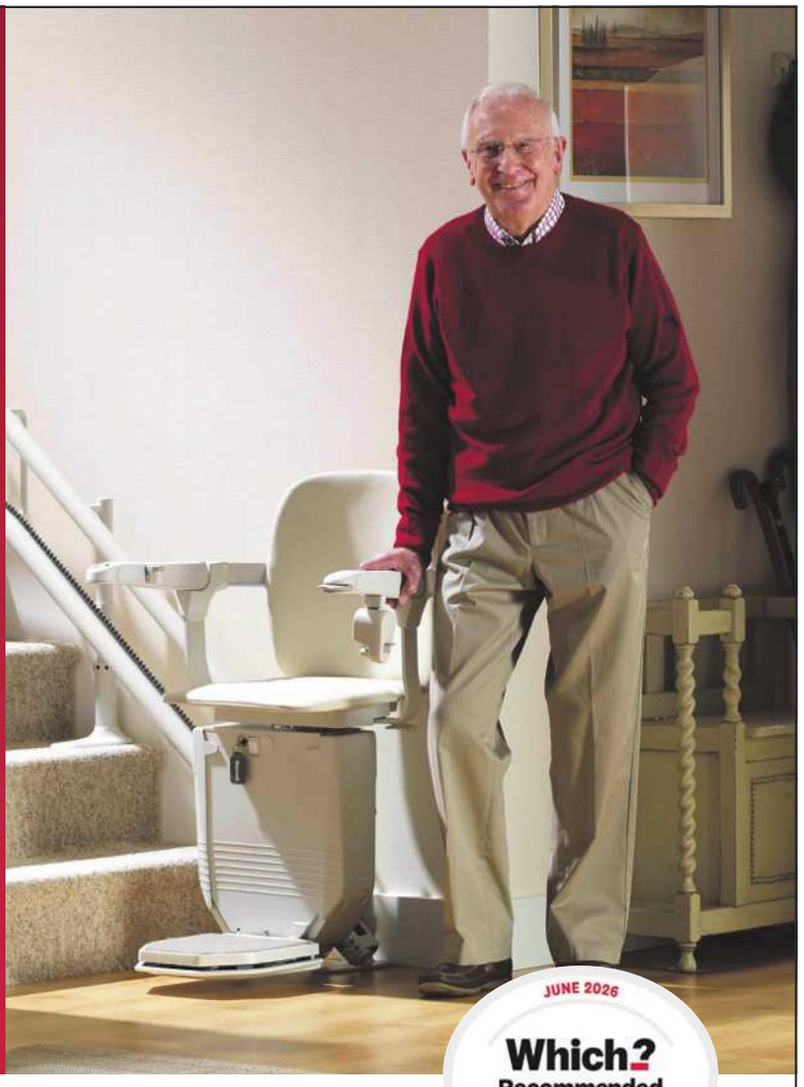

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Henley-on-Thames RG9 1AG
Ipswich IP3 9QJ
Letchworth SG6 1LJ
Maidstone ME15 6RQ
Milton Keynes MK12 6HS
Norwich NR6 6EP
Orpington BR6 0JW
Oxford OX2 0HF
Rayleigh SS6 7LF
Romford RM11 1PZ
NEW - Lakeside/Thurrock RM20 1WN
Tolworth KT6 7BF
NEW - Tunbridge Wells TN2 3BF

South Coast

Brighton & Hove BN3 7BA
Poole/Bournemouth BH12 1DA
Southampton SO30 4FN
St. Leonards-on-Sea TN38 0DX

South West / Wales

Bath BA2 2RX
Bristol BS10 6PZ
Cardiff CF23 9XE
Cheltenham GL51 9RR
Exeter EX2 8NW
Plymouth PL7 4JN
Swindon SN3 4NS
Taunton TA1 5NF
Truro TR4 8HS

Midlands

Brierley Hill DY5 1AJ
Coventry CV3 2SB
Henley-in-Arden B95 5BA
Lichfield WS13 6UY
Newcastle-under-Lyme ST5 9ED
Nottingham NG9 3JA
Peterborough PE2 7BX
Shrewsbury SY1 4NU
Solihull B90 3BL
Wellingborough NN8 2DP

North West

HSL at LIVHOME Aintree L9 5AN
Blackpool FY3 7AT
Burnley BB11 1LE
Chester CH1 4QG
Formby L37 4AQ
NEW - Preston PR1 4HZ
Prestwich M25 1AX
Stockport SK1 2BU
Warrington WA2 8TW

North East / Yorkshire

Dewsbury WF13 2DU
Guiseley LS20 8LZ
Hull HU6 7PL
Lincoln LN5 8QJ
Newcastle upon Tyne NE21 5ST
Rotherham S66 2TP
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2NH
York YO30 4WZ

Scotland

Bathgate EH48 2AG
Glasgow G13 2TG
HSL at Sterling Home:
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Today Warm and dry with sunny spells in England and Wales but some rain elsewhere. Max 28C (82F), min 8C (46F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm	Sun hr* yesterday
Aberdeen	19	C	1.2	2.5
Aberporth	17	PC	0.0	11.5
Anglesey	19	S	0.0	5.6
Aviemore	18	D	1.0	0.1
Barnstaple	20	C	0.0	**
Bedford	21	PC	0.0	**
Belfast	18	R	0.4	2.1
Birmingham	22	PC	0.0	**
Bournemouth	22	S	0.0	12.4
Bridlington	21	C	0.4	**
Bristol	20	PC	0.0	7.0
Camborne	19	S	0.0	9.8
Cardiff	20	S	1.0	12.0
Edinburgh	17	M	0.0	0.3
Eskdalemuir	16	C	0.6	1.2
Glasgow	16	C	1.8	2.9
Hereford	22	PC	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	23	S	0.0	9.3
Ipswich	23	PC	0.0	6.1
Isle of Man	18	PC	0.0	5.9
Isle of Wight	22	S	0.0	**
Jersey	20	S	0.0	10.7
Keswick	18	PC	0.0	**
Kinloss	18	**	0.6	1.1
Leeds	17	C	0.0	**
Lerwick	12	R	3.2	0.6
Leuchars	18	C	0.0	1.0
Lincoln	21	S	0.0	4.6
Liverpool	20	S	0.0	**
London	24	S	0.0	9.3
Lyneham	21	S	0.0	7.9
Manchester	20	C	0.0	4.1
Margate	22	PC	0.0	12.0
Milford Haven	21	S	0.0	**
Newcastle	18	C	0.0	**
Nottingham	20	PC	0.0	8.5
Orkney	14	R	7.8	**
Oxford	22	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	20	C	0.0	**
Portland	20	D	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	21	PC	0.0	**
Shoreham	25	S	0.0	10.7
Shrewsbury	22	C	0.0	2.9
Snowdonia	17	PC	0.0	**
Southend	22	S	0.0	8.5
South Uist	15	C	11.0	**
Stornoway	16	R	7.8	1.0
Tiree	16	C	2.4	3.4
Whitehaven	15	C	0.2	0.3
Wick	**	C	4.0	**
Yeovilton	21	S	0.0	12.8

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	33	S	Madeira	27	PC
Amsterdam	22	PC	Madrid	34	S
Athens	31	PC	Malaga	28	S
Auckland	**	**	Mallorca	34	PC
Bahrain	42	S	Malta	33	PC
Bangkok	31	R	Melbourne	13	PC
Barbados	31	SH	Mexico City	24	B
Barcelona	32	PC	Miami	28	B
Beijing	**	**	Milan	32	PC
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	29	PC
Belgrade	36	S	Montreal	26	B
Berlin	23	PC	Moscow	29	S
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	30	**
Bordeaux	31	S	Munich	26	S
Brussels	22	S	Nairobi	23	B
Bucharest	33	S	Naples	33	S
Budapest	34	S	New Orleans	30	PC
Buenos Aires	**	**	New York	30	PC
Cairo	34	PC	Nice	31	PC
Calcutta	26	R	Nicosia	33	PC
Canberra	12	DU	Oslo	16	PC
Cape Town	19	S	Paris	25	S
Chicago	26	B	Perth	18	B
Copenhagen	17	DU	Prague	24	S
Corfu	36	PC	Reykjavik	12	R
Delhi	26	R	Riga	20	PC
Dubai	42	PC	Rio de Janeiro	32	PC
Dublin	19	B	Riyadh	45	S
Faro	25	S	Rome	33	S
Florence	36	S	San Francisco	22	PC
Frankfurt	23	S	Santiago	13	PC
Geneva	28	S	São Paulo	25	S
Gibraltar	27	S	Seoul	34	S
Helsinki	21	PC	Seychelles	29	B
Hong Kong	32	PC	Singapore	32	B
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	21	B
Istanbul	28	PC	Stockholm	16	B
Jerusalem	31	PC	Sydney	16	S
Johannesburg	20	S	Tel Aviv	31	PC
Kuala Lumpur	33	PC	Tenerife	32	S
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	33	PC
Lanzarote	31	PC	Vancouver	21	PC
Las Palmas	28	PC	Venice	**	**
Lima	21	DU	Vienna	28	PC
Lisbon	31	S	Warsaw	22	PC
Los Angeles	25	PC	Washington	31	B
Luxor	39	S	Zurich	**	**

Five days ahead

Hot and mainly dry and sunny in England and Wales but the risk of rain at times elsewhere

Tomorrow

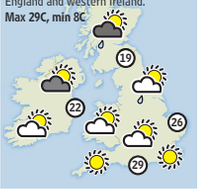
Dry, sunny and warm or hot across southern Britain and the south of Ireland. A band of cloud and showery rain will spread eastwards over the rest of Britain and Ireland.

Max 32C, min 6C

Monday

Mostly dry with warm spells of sunshine and areas of cloud across the British Isles, but the risk of a few isolated showers in Scotland, northern England and western Ireland.

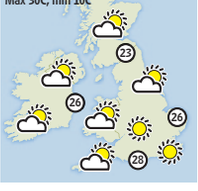
Max 29C, min 8C



Tuesday

Dry and warm or hot across England, Wales, southern Scotland and Ireland. Rather cloudy with the risk of a few light showers in northern Scotland.

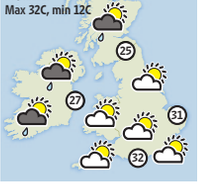
Max 30C, min 10C



Wednesday

Hot and dry with plenty of sunshine over England and Wales. Humid with sunny spells and the risk of showers in Ireland and Scotland, perhaps thundery in places.

Max 32C, min 12C

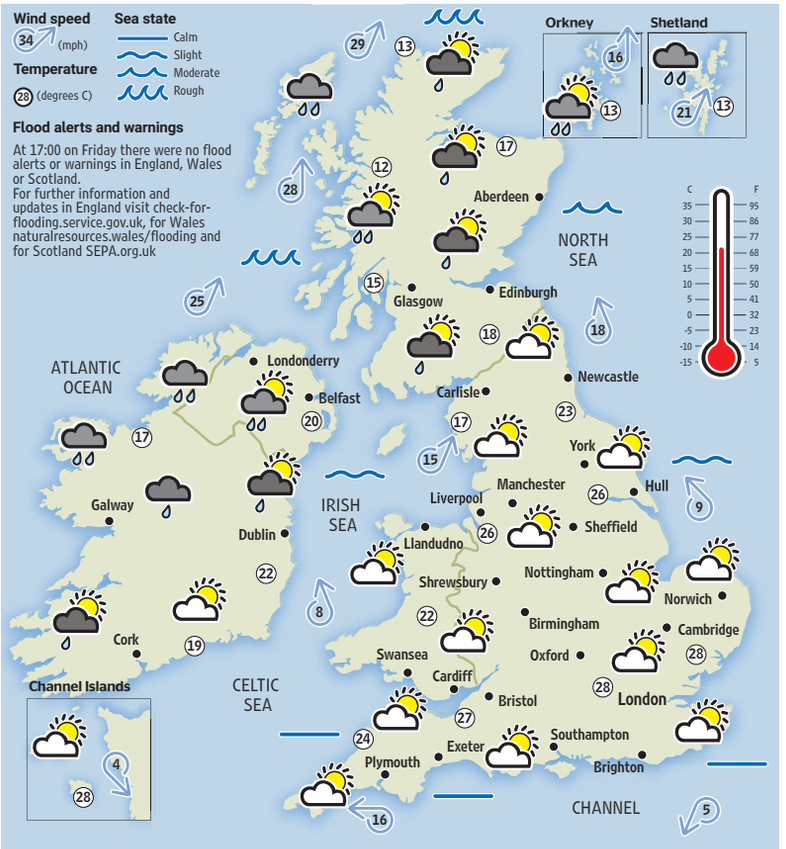


Thursday

Feeling fresher in Ireland and Scotland with sunny spells and the risk of a few showers. Hot, dry and sunny over most of England and Wales.

Max 34C, min 10C

The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest



General situation: Mostly sunny, dry and warm over England and Wales, but cloudier and fresher in Ireland and Scotland with showery rain.
SE Eng, Cen S Eng, E Anglia, London, Midlands, SW Eng, NW Eng, NE Eng, Cen N Eng, E Eng, Lake District, Wales, Channel Is: A dry and warm day with plenty of sunshine, but thicker cloud will develop at times turning the sunshine hazy. Light to moderate southerly winds. Maximum 28C (82F), minimum 12C (54F).

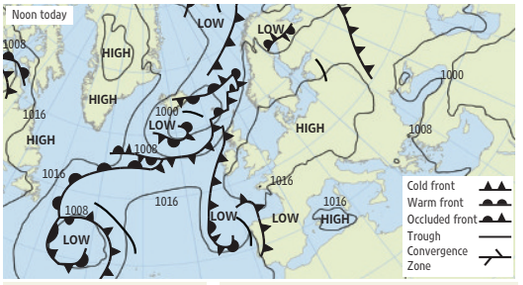
SW Scotland, Borders, IoM: Some dry and sunny spells but areas of thicker cloud will bring showery light rain at times. Light to moderate south or southwesterly winds. Maximum 19C (66F), minimum 12C (54F).
Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth: Mainly dry with sunny spells in the morning but cloud increasing to bring showery rain during the afternoon. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 18C (63F), minimum 11C (52F).

Republic of Ireland, N Ireland: Mainly dry with sunny spells in southeastern areas but rather cloudy with showery rain further north and west. Light to moderate south or southwesterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 12C (54F).
Cen Highland, NW Scotland, N Isles, NE Scotland, Argyll: Mostly cloudy with outbreaks of rain, heavy at times. Moderate to fresh southwesterly winds. Maximum 17C (63F), minimum 8C (46F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	09:33	3.6	22:22	3.5
Avonmouth	02:35	10.2	15:15	10.0
Belfast	06:57	3.0	19:41	3.0
Cardiff	02:25	9.6	15:02	9.5
Devonport	01:04	4.4	13:56	4.5
Dover	07:05	5.3	19:46	5.5
Dublin	07:52	2.6	20:30	2.6
Falmouth	--:--	--	13:34	4.2
Greenock	07:53	2.8	20:15	2.9
Harwich	07:38	3.2	20:01	3.3
Holyhead	06:18	4.6	19:10	4.6
Hull	01:53	5.9	14:34	6.2
Leith	10:44	4.6	23:32	4.6
Liverpool	06:57	7.8	19:44	7.7
London Bridge	09:33	5.7	22:10	6.1
Lowestoft	05:42	2.2	17:57	2.3
Milford Haven	01:46	5.6	14:29	5.5
Morecambe	07:11	7.6	19:58	7.5
Newhaven	06:53	5.3	19:34	5.4
Newquay	--:--	--	13:28	5.3
Oban	01:55	3.0	14:35	3.0
Penzance	--:--	--	12:55	4.4
Portsmouth	07:34	3.9	20:12	4.0
Shoreham	07:01	4.9	19:46	5.0
Southampton	06:14	3.7	18:53	3.8
Swansea	01:53	7.4	14:30	7.3
Tees	11:53	4.7	--:--	--
Weymouth	02:01	1.3	15:06	1.4



Synoptic situation

A ridge of high pressure covering most of central Europe will bring a dry and warm day with plenty of sunshine over England and Wales. Low pressure centred to the south of Iceland will push a couple of cold fronts eastwards into Ireland and Scotland, bringing rather cloudy skies and outbreaks of rain, especially over high ground.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Heathrow, Greater London, 26.4C
Coldest: Swyddffynnon, 3.0C
Wettest: Kinlochewe, Ross and Cromarty, 40.8mm
Sunniest: Yeovilton, 12.8hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.34
Sun sets: 20.36
Moon rises: --.--
Moon sets: 17.57
New moon: August 12

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:37-04:53
Belfast	21:41-05:19
Birmingham	21:17-05:10
Cardiff	21:19-05:19
Exeter	21:18-05:23
Glasgow	21:39-05:07
Liverpool	21:25-05:11
London	21:07-05:06
Manchester	21:22-05:08
Newcastle	21:25-05:00
Norwich	21:05-04:57
Penzance	21:24-05:32
Sheffield	21:18-05:05

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

Vincent van Gogh's painting *The Starry Night* is mesmerising — a turbulent, swirling night sky dominated by a huge spiral. Even though this seems to be a highly surreal picture, similar swirling patterns can seen in nature, such as wave-like clouds, ocean waves as wind blows over the water, and most recently, whirlpools of plasma detected on the surface of the sun [News, August 5].

All these whirls are created by the turbulence of Kelvin-Helmholtz instabilities, discovered and developed in 1868-71 by Lord Kelvin and Hermann von Helmholtz. Such turbulence is uncannily similar to *The Starry Night* and could have been the inspiration for Van Gogh.

Other ideas have been proposed, including that the turbulence in *The Starry Night* represented Van Gogh's state of mind when he made the painting during his stay in a mental hospital in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in the south of France. In that time he made 150 paintings and he could see the night sky through the window in his room.

But Van Gogh's picture may actually have nothing to do with stars. John Barrow, the Cambridge mathematician and astronomer, recognised that the picture was very similar to the spiral shape of the M51 galaxy, nicknamed the Whirlpool, and Barrow came up with an intriguing theory.

The spiral structure of the M51 galaxy was revealed in the 19th century by William Parsons, the third Earl of Rosse, using his large 72in reflector telescope at his home at Birr Castle, Co Offaly, in Ireland. At the time this was the largest telescope in the world and when Parsons made a sketch of the galaxy it was widely published in newspapers and magazines, and featured in a book, *Popular Astronomy*, by Camille Flammarion at the Paris Observatory.

Van Gogh was well read and even in his mental asylum he could easily have seen a copy of Parsons's sketch. So it is highly conceivable that *The Starry Night* was inspired by the Whirlpool galaxy.

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Obituaries

Vicki Wickham

Influential producer of Ready Steady Go! who also managed Dusty Springfield

In the early 1960s *Ready Steady Go!* was the TV show for the cool crowd. Broadcast live on Friday night from Studio 9 in Rediffusion's cramped basement on Kingsway in London, it featured top bands surrounded by a dancing audience in an atmosphere of informality and, quite often, chaos.

The show was devised by Elkan Allan, but its success was largely due to the enthusiasm of its junior staff, including Vicki Wickham. She was fresh from boarding school and secretarial college, and her organisational skills and knowledge of bands quickly became invaluable. She was soon producing the show.

The production team, headed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, spent most evenings in the London clubs listening to bands and they would also scout for dancers. Appearing on the show in the audience was a hot ticket, so good dancers were not hard to find. The show regularly featured the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and interviews with Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali), Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. Wickham was instrumental in booking bands and for introducing British audiences to black American singers such as Tina Turner, Marvin Gaye and Otis Redding.

Ready Steady Go! differentiated itself from *Top of the Pops* by having bands perform live in the studio. Its set designer, Nicholas Ferguson, was recruited from the Slade School of Fine Art and had to produce new sets on a weekly budget of £12, so he resorted to giant collages he had cut out from magazines and coaxed the photographic department upstairs to blow up. "Vicki was the mainstay of the show," he recalled. "Elkan Allan took all the credit, but Vicki was brilliant at spotting new talent. We were all broke, even the musicians. Because of the show's success, we could get into any club in London. One night Vicki, her assistant, Rosie Simon, Dionne Warwick and I were at the Ad Lib. We were treated like royalty but when the bill came none of us had any money. We had to do a runner."

Dusty Springfield appeared in the 1963 pilot show with her brother, Tom, in their group the Springfields and formed an immediate friendship with Wickham. Both women were gay: "I wasn't out in the Sixties," Wickham said in a Guardian interview. "I didn't know what I was really. Everyone knew I was gay, but we were so unpolitically conscious."

Much of the black music popular in America suited Springfield's voice, so she was always up to date and recommended several Motown artists who might otherwise have gone unrecognised in the UK. In April 1965 she devised and presented a Motown special that featured the Supremes, Stevie Wonder, the Miracles and Martha and the Vandellas.

At the Sanremo Music Festival Springfield heard Pino Donnagio's *Io Che Non Vivo (Senza Te)* and knew she wanted to record it, but the song needed English lyrics. Wickham volunteered and enlisted the help of a friend, Simon Napier-Bell (at her suggestion, Bell went on to manage the Yardbirds and, much later, Wham!). The translation was far from literal, but *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me* was Springfield's most successful single and provided both lyricists with a steady income for life.

Springfield and Wickham formed a lifelong friendship, often strained to the limits. There would be quiet weekends when, along with the singer Madeline Bell, they would drive out to Wickham's parents' farmhouse near Newbury for Sunday lunch and play board games. Or there would be riotous parties in Springfield's Baker Street flat around the corner from Wickham's flat in New Cavendish Street (affordable then on her £7 a week salary), which often ended in a food-throwing contest.

Springfield had signed up to Vic Billings for management, but they both relied heavily on Wickham's back-up to talk Springfield down from divaish behaviour. Springfield slept in late and was a notorious note-leaver, the greeting indicating the scale of the errand: "Dear Vicki" for something as mundane as a pint of milk; "Darling Vicki" for taking clothes to the dry cleaners, accompanied by a brisk message requesting that they remove the buttons first.

Ready Steady Go! finished in December 1966 and Wickham immediately

Wickham had a no-nonsense attitude

spent three months in New York. By this time she had acquired one of the best contact books in London and on her return was approached by the Beatles' manager, Brian Epstein — his nickname for her was "Sticky Wicket" — to be one of the producers of his Sunday night concerts at the Saville Theatre, including a performance by a new artist called Jimi Hendrix. She also joined EMI in their artists and repertoire department but found it "confining and corporate and just not for me".

With Kit Lambert, an old friend who had forgiven Wickham and her friends for once setting fire to his pocket when out clubbing, Wickham formed a production company and signed, among others, Marsha Hunt, an American actress and singer who was later famous for her relationship with Mick Jagger. Lambert, along with Chris Stamp (the brother of the actor Terence), ran Track Records and managed the Who. In 1970 Wickham returned to New York to run Track's US office with her best friend, Nancy Lewis. The pair would have such long daily lunches in the Russian Tea Room that the restaurant installed a phone at their table.

An only child, Victoria Heather Wickham was born in 1939 to Stephen and Stella Wickham and grew up on their farm near Newbury, Berkshire. The hands-on working farm environment was a big influence on her no-nonsense attitude to life. She went on to the boarding school Cranford, which she hated, and headed to London aged 16 in the hope of avoiding a secretarial job. In the early years she worked as a children's book illustrator's assistant, a cinema usher, a coffee-shop waitress and an office cleaner, eventually landing a job as an assistant to a BBC radio producer named Charles Chilton.

By the 1970s home was New York, particularly as she managed the trio Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles and had started a relationship with the group's singer and songwriter Nona Hendryx. Wickham set about transforming their image, ditching the demure long frocks and decking them out in space-age silver outfits, feathers and helmets. "Pat still hasn't forgiven me," she recalled. The group, now simply known as Labelle, scored a huge hit in 1975 with *Lady Marmalade*, and when the trio split in 1976 Wickham continued to manage and live with Hendryx. They were married in New York in 2011 and Hendryx survives her.

By 1986, Springfield had largely relocated to America and was floundering. Wickham became her manager, steering her back into the limelight with a hugely successful collaboration with the Pet Shop Boys. Springfield, however, was in and out of rehab and was at one point sectioned at New York's Bellevue Hospital for cutting her arms. Wickham continued in her role until Springfield's death from cancer in 1999.

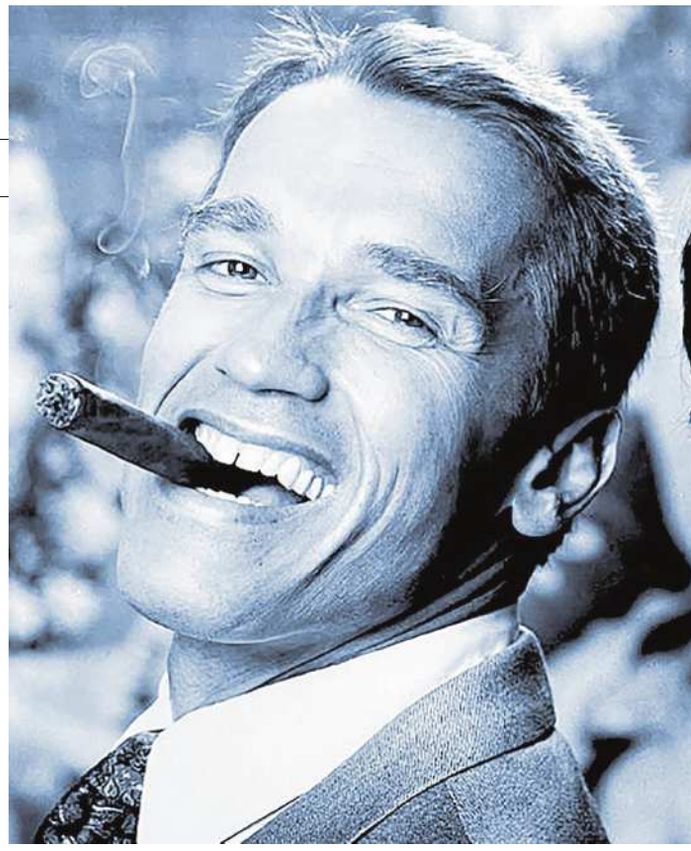
Charmingly bossy, Wickham also managed Marc Almond, Morrissey and Holly Johnson. With the journalist Penny Valentine she co-wrote Springfield's authorised biography, *Dancing with Demons*, which appeared in 2000, a year after the singer's death, although several attempts to turn it into a musical came to nothing.

Hugely supportive of others in the music business, particularly through the US charity MusiCares, Wickham was given a Woman of the Year lifetime achievement award in 1999 and an OBE in 2013 for services to music.

She had collected Springfield's OBE on her behalf in 1999 when she was in hospital. "They were very sweet [at St James's Palace] about it, but disappointed Dust wasn't going — they'd got all her albums there, waiting for her to autograph them."

Wickham was unprepared for the huge quantities of paperwork and the plaque that accompanied the OBE, so the palace staff rummaged around a cupboard and offered her a Fortnum & Mason carrier bag to take everything home. "Isn't this the award they give to cleaners?" asked Springfield from her hospital bed.

Vicki Wickham OBE, talent manager, was born on March 23, 1939. She died of Lewy body disease on August 1, 2026, aged 87



Charles Gaines

Novelist and outdoorsman who discovered Arnold Schwarzenegger, popularised bodybuilding with Pumping Iron, and went on to co-invent paintball

Yes, Arnold Schwarzenegger boasted an extraordinary physique. But as a bodybuilding writer, Charles Gaines had met plenty of muscled supermen. What set Schwarzenegger apart, Gaines felt, was his mind.

Before his career took a twist when almost by accident he co-invented the sport of paintball, Gaines made his name with a bodybuilding novel, *Stay Hungry*, that he adapted for the big screen. Seeking an actor for a lead role, Gaines met Schwarzenegger at a Mr Universe contest and was struck by his magnetism as well as his muscles.

The "Austrian Oak", who had moved to the US aged 21 in 1968, flexed keen intelligence and ruthless ambition. Convinced that he had star quality, Gaines persuaded the film's director and co-writer, Bob Rafelson (obituary, August 9, 2022) to cast Schwarzenegger in a key role alongside Jeff Bridges and Sally Field. The 1976 comedy-drama was a modest success that launched Schwarzenegger's acting career in earnest after a handful of appearances in forgettable fare. He was named 1977 new star of the year at the Golden Globe awards and also collaborated with Gaines for a documentary-drama, *Pumping Iron*.

Inspired by a bestselling 1974 book of the same name by Gaines and the British-born photographer George Butler (obituary, October 28, 2021), the 1977 hit was another big break for the future Terminator. The core of the film is Schwarzenegger's rivalry with Lou Ferrigno (later to gain television renown in *The Incredible Hulk*) for the 1975 Mr Olympia title, which the Austrian wins after discomfiting an edgy Ferrigno with subtle put-downs during an apparently nonchalant conversation over breakfast.

"Arnold had a huge advantage over all of his competitors," Gaines told the author Fiaz Rafiq for a 2021 book, "because of his mind. And what that mind allowed him to do was not only to train harder than most of his competitors, but to psyche people out, to figure out what their weak points were and how to exploit those weak points."

No milksop himself, Gaines made the case that what was often dismissed as an obscure fitness subculture — something of a freak show with homoerotic undertones — was in fact a form of artistic expression, with the weightlifters sculpting their bodies much as Michelangelo had chiselled David. His work with Butler helped to popularise strength training and gyms during the 1970s fitness craze.

"I remember one night taking Kurt Vonnegut down to see a bodybuilding show, the first one he had ever seen," Gaines recalled. "We took Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal, we took all kinds of interesting people. We introduced Arnold to Jackie Onassis, we made a point of trying to glamorise ... bodybuilding in order to not just do bodybuilding service, but in order to help sell books."

Schwarzenegger and Gaines, who habitually greeted the star with a cheery "Hey, Oak!", were friends and the writer was invited to the future California governor's 1986 wedding to Maria Shriver, a member of the Kennedy family. "He learnt things unbelievably quickly. If he saw something you did that he liked, the way you carried yourself, the way you spoke, the way you dressed, drank wine, or how you smoke cigars, or any of this, the next day he 'owned' it. He would study you, and the next day he would be doing it," Gaines recalled. "He's often quoted the title of my book, when people ask him his secrets to success. He says, 'stay hungry'."

'There aren't many days we don't belly laugh'
Marriages and engagements
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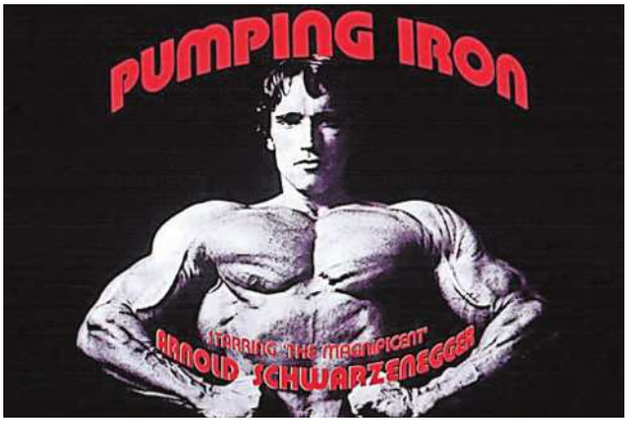
COURTESY OF GAINES FAMILY

Gaines, right, said he was knew Schwarzenegger, left, had star quality when they first met. Below, the documentary-drama Pumping Iron was a hit in 1977



Peter Ahrends

Architect whose National Gallery scheme was called a 'monstrous carbuncle' by Prince Charles

The savaging Peter Ahrends received from Prince Charles in May 1984 would be taken by many architects as a badge of honour. Invited to speak at the 150th birthday celebrations of the Royal Institute of British Architects (Riba) at Hampton Court, the prince condemned Ahrends' and his partners' winning design for an extension to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, calling it a "monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend".

The prince thought the modernist glazed façade of the extension was out of keeping with the Portland stone original, and reserved particular ire for a glass tower with aluminium spires at the front of the building, describing it as "a kind of vast municipal fire station".

Ahrends, Burton and Koralek had won a design competition for the project in 1982 by responding to a brief by the environment secretary, Michael Heseltine, who stipulated that the new wing must incorporate 51,000 sq ft of office space to help to pay for the extension. The proposed glass tower enclosed a stairwell to the new office space. It was denied planning permission in September 1984 by one of Heseltine's successors, Patrick Jenkin, who called the extension "inappropriate for this site of national importance".

An alternative design by the US architectural power couple Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown was built and opened in 1991. Dispensing with the office space and wholly funded by Lord Sainsbury, the building maintained the Portland stone façade of the original with a more playful postmodernist take on the neoclassical detailing.

Ahrends struck a magnanimous tone when interviewed by the Daily Express in 1984: "I would say that Prince Charles's remarks are ill-considered. His comments about modern architecture in general show his reactionary position but people must make whatever comments they feel appropriate." Yet his practice was damaged and, in the years that followed, ABK struggled to pick up the same volume of work, though it did win a commission to design a new British embassy in Moscow in 1987, an elegant ensemble of four glass pavilions linked by high-level bridges.

Peter Ahrends was born in Berlin in 1933. His father, Steffen, was an architect and his mother, Margarete "Gretel" (née Visino), a weaver. Both trained at the modernist Bauhaus school of design, and both had worked in Moscow on Soviet new town development. The Jewish family fled Nazi Germany in 1937 and emigrated to South Africa, where Peter attended King Edward VII school and a boarding school in East London after his parents divorced in 1944.

He arrived in London at 18 to make his fortune. Channelling the artisanal ethos of the Bauhaus, Ahrends initially trained as a carpenter, but the Festival of Britain on London's South Bank in 1951 strengthened his longing to design buildings. At the Architectural Association in London he met Richard Burton and Paul Koralek and the three young men bonded over their love of Frank Lloyd Wright. In an environment of strict modernist orthodoxy they were even marked down as "fey" in their affection of the dandified American who took a more organic approach to design.

The three amigos further developed their more nuanced stance on modernism by driving through Europe in a Land Rover and ended up in Iran. Thirsty for more adventure, Ahrends went on to drive through Africa with his girlfriend, Liz Robertson, who later became his wife. She died in 2007. He is survived by their daughters Jacqui and Jane and by his partner Marlene Rolfe.

Ahrends worked in the office of Denys Lasdun, who would go on to design the National Theatre. The chance to open his own practice with his old friends arose when the trio won an international design competition for the Berkeley Library at Trinity College Dublin in 1960. A dash of local context was added by the use of Wicklow granite but the slightly brutalist structure was deplored by traditionalists as a blight to the surrounding neoclassical buildings and the Joycian Georgian terraces beyond. During construction a pony and cart had to be pulled out after sinking into freshly poured concrete, which some thought was an ill augury of the old being swallowed up by the new.

Indeed, the building, which was completed in 1967, was at the vanguard of changing academic architecture and led to other commissions to design university buildings. They included Chichester Theological College and Templeton College business school at Oxford University, which was built in seven phases between 1967 and 1990. A residential building for Keble College, Oxford (1980) aped the brickwork of the college on the street side and oozed high-tech modernism with its curving dark glass on the other side.

The Riba invited Prince Charles back to make a speech for its 175th anniversary in 2009, in which he struck a conciliatory tone. "I am sorry if I somehow left the faintest impression that I wished to kick-start some kind of style war between classicists and modernists; or that I somehow wanted to drag the world back to the 18th century. All I asked was for room to be given to traditional approaches to architecture and urbanism." It remained an instinct he could not resist. In 2009 Lord Rogers' proposed £3 billion redevelopment of Chelsea Barracks was cancelled by the Qatari client, reportedly after the prince wrote to the Qatari royal family.

Unlike Lord Rogers, Ahrends was not a warrior in the architectural style wars, but preferred to let his designs that were built do the talking.

Peter Ahrends, architect, was born on April 30, 1933. He died on May 30, 2026, aged 93

Charles Gaines

Writer and outdoorsman who invented paintball

Ravenous for adventure and travel, Gaines tried everything from bull-riding to skydiving and parlayed his love for writing and the outdoors into fiction and non-fiction books, magazine articles and screenplays. The flipside of his energy and enthusiasm was an obsessive personality that led to physical pain — hip replacements from exercising to excess and gum disease from overflossing — and angst after the self-described "dumb" country boy from Alabama was seduced by the Hollywood lifestyle.

Since Venice Beach and Santa Monica were bodybuilding hubs, Gaines spent considerable time in Los Angeles. He became, he wrote in his 1994 memoir *A Family Place*, "a high-handed, big-appetite experience chaser" who frequented fancy restaurants, "ordering fried squid at midnight in a hubbub of movie and literary talk, starlets practising English accents, and people bubbling out of the bathrooms with wired eyes and little white powder moustaches".

Enduring a midlife crisis and fretting that his marriage was imperilled, in 1990 he bought 160 acres of land in Nova Scotia and built a cabin there with his family as a refuge from urban temptations and a base for fishing Atlantic salmon. He was not short of money after cashing out his stake in a foundational paintball company in the mid-Eighties, having birthed the sport with his friend Hayes Noel.

Gaines returned to his sheep farm in New Hampshire and flicked through an agricultural mail-order catalogue which sold air-guns that fired paintballs to mark livestock for identification. He bought two and invited his friend to the farm in the autumn of 1980: "On an October afternoon in my backyard, he and I became possibly the first people to conduct a formal duel with cattle markers, and Hayes perhaps the first man to learn what it felt like to be shot in the butt by one."

The following June, Gaines invited over a disparate group of friends for a test weekend. Among them were a turkey hunter, an emergency-room doctor, a venture capitalist, a movie producer, a Green Beret Vietnam veteran and three magazine writers. The aim of the game was to collect coloured flags and be the first to reach a designated point without being shot. "Unsurprisingly," he wrote, "each man played the game according to who he was: the cautious sneaking through the woods avoiding firefights, the bold seeking them out, the wily perching in trees by a flag station."

The trio of journalists wrote about it and Gaines was deluged by letters from people begging for more details. Gaines, Noel and another friend, Bob Gurnsey, formed a company, National Survival Game. They codified rules, bought pistols and paintballs and cheap goggles and compasses from Walmart, making paintball kits that they sold via mail order at a hefty mark-up. Less than 25 years later, Gaines wrote, paintball was played annually by more than 15 million people in 112 countries. It is, he reflected, "a strange thing to have on your résumé, for sure".

Charles Latham Gaines III was born

'Arnold's advantage over his rivals was his mind. He psyched people out'

in Jacksonville, Florida, to Charles and Margaret (née Shook), and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. His father was an executive at the Shook family business, a large mining, supply and insulation company. The family were wealthy but Gaines rebelled against his comfortable and conventional upbringing, abandoning his studies at Washington and Lee University in Virginia and hitchhiking across the country.

He studied art history at the Birmingham-Southern College, where he met Patricia Ellisor, who was Miss Alabama in 1961. They married in 1963, the year he graduated. His wife, a painter and sculptor, survives him along with their children: a daughter, Greta, a competitive fly-fisher, musician, former world champion snowboarder and cannabis activist, and two sons, Latham and Shelby, who compose scores for films and plays.

Gaines then took a graduate degree in creative writing from the University of Iowa, where he was mentored by Vonnegut. He had a spell in Ireland, honing his writing skills and devouring the works of WB Yeats before relocating to New Hampshire to pursue his dream of writing a novel.

The result was *Stay Hungry* (1972). Gaines could draw from his own experience. "Pumping iron," he wrote in an essay, "was the first means I had found to occasion noticeable change in myself — to become, by design, something bigger and better shaped than what I was. It seemed a sacramental thing at the time."

In later life he split his time between Nova Scotia and Alabama, where he lived by a bass-rich lake owned by his father. He published 25 books, including a biography of Charles Atlas (with Butler). He also judged bodybuilding contests, competed in international fly-fishing championships, hunted woodcock and grouse and supported environmental causes alongside his friend and fellow Nova Scotia property owner, the actor Ethan Hawke.

"He climbed mountains, trekked across ice, fished and hunted on almost every continent," Schwarzenegger wrote in a tribute. "He was interested in everything — and his interest was contagious. I'm lucky that he was always looking for new frontiers, because that's how he found me and our niche sport of bodybuilding."

Charles Gaines, writer and outdoorsman, was born on January 6, 1942. He died of cancer on July 21, 2026, aged 84

Readers' lives

Marriages and engagements

'There aren't many days we don't belly laugh'

Alice Plosker, 41, a psychotherapist, and **Jac Bisgood**, 42, a heating engineer, were married on June 27, 2026, at Drayton Court Hotel, in Ealing, west London

"This weekend I was so busy! I can't wait to tell you what I did. My parents had their wedding. I saw my Welsh and Australian cousins and *Bopas* [*Bopa* means auntie in Welsh]. Watched *Toy Story 2* and made slime with my friend Eszti."

Seven-year old Cora penned her breathless account at school on the Monday after her parents' wedding celebrations. She goes on to report that it was "just like the best day of my life" then adds that the best day of her life was in fact the birth of her younger sister, Manon, now four.

Their parents, Alice and Jac, have been a couple for 19 years, after meeting through a mutual friend on a night out at a pub in Cardiff. Alice had graduated from what is now Cardiff Metropolitan University with a degree in textiles and was working in a clothes shop. Jac was a "chugger", promoting charities, "of no fixed abode".

Alice remembers Jac looking "a little bit dishevelled" with baggy trousers and dyed red hair. "He was very charming, very funny and chatty," she recalls. He was impressed that she drank lager by the pint and was an accomplished pool player. "I thought, wow, here we go," he says.

He grew up in Cardigan, in west Wales, and returned to Cardiff to see Alice a few times before moving to

Their girls thought they were already married when they broke news of their engagement

the city three months later, staying with a friend from high school, Aron, who would go on to be his best man.

A year into their relationship, Alice returned to her family home in Ealing, west London, to train as a psychotherapist working with children and adolescents. It was Alice's mother who suggested Jac join them. "I knew I wanted to be with Alice," he says. He got to know her mother, who is French, and Welsh father.

"Jac will bend over backwards to help out friends and family," she says. "He is silly and fun to be around. He is a proper nerd and finds new and unusual things to geek over. He is creative and made me a mosaic mirror when we first met."

VIKTORIA CHIKALO

Jac and Alice's daughters Manon and Cora were flower girls; top, the handfasting

He appreciates her kindness and compassion. "Alice's friends and family trust her opinion," he says. "She supports me with decisions if I'm having a tricky time with something. There aren't many days when we don't make each other belly laugh. She's also beautiful."

Alice's parents retired to live in France in 2011. By 2018, Jac had trained as a plumber and heating engineer and was working for himself. Alice was practising as a psychotherapist.

He would evade the subject of marriage. "Since very early on I knew that I was committed to Alice," he says. "I didn't feel the need to prove it to anyone." Their focus was on becoming parents. Cora was born in 2018 and Manon in 2021. "I learn a lot about parenting by watching Alice," he says. She describes him as a "devoted, available and enthusiastic dad".

Fatherhood gave Jac a different perspective on marriage. "It eventually made sense," he says. "Having the girls tipped the scale." Alice would joke that, if Jac ever proposed, she would say "no" on principle because he had left it so long. "It didn't feel like we needed it," she says.

In April last year, Jac chose a ring that he took to Paris with Alice on their first child-free trip since becoming parents. "Because I had organised it all, there was nothing in my brain telling me that he was going to propose," she says. On their last night, Jac proposed on one knee, "in my pants", in their Airbnb.

They broke the news to their girls, who assumed they were already married and wanted to know if the wedding was the next day. As wedding plans continued, the girls moaned: "Are you still talking about the wedding?" They were looking forward to being flower girls, but not their parents' "smoochy kissing".

Alice, who wore a white jumpsuit, helped Jac to choose his suit. She got ready with six friends on the morning of the wedding. They walked to the 2.30pm ceremony at the Drayton Court Hotel in Ealing.

She entered with her father to Fleetwood Mac's *Landslide* in front of 80 guests. The couple had written their own vows and the celebrant led them in a handfasting ceremony with the girls. Jac's father read a poem that he had written and the newlyweds exited to Marvin Gaye's *How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)*.

Alice's mother led guests in a French song. There were drinks, a hog roast, and little bags of blue and yellow dragées (sweets) in keeping with the colour scheme.

A live band called Supereight played Mary Clark's *Take Me I'm Yours* for the couple's first dance. Alice loves to dance and Manon was spotted in the middle of the dancefloor, shimmying with her eyes closed and her arms in the air. The couple embraced the hot weather and stress of England playing Panama in the World Cup that night. When Alice admired Jude Bellingham, Cora reminded her that she was married.

"I do feel different and much better being married," says Jac. "I probably should have done it years ago."

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'She's a champion sleeper and a true foodie in the making'

Isabella Sofia Mihill Marquez was born on September 15, 2024, at University College Hospital, north London, to Gabriela, 33, and Timothy Mihill, 34

She appeared in The Times on Saturday April 19, 2025

THE TIMES

Cherish water like our ancestors did

Credo
Ian Bradley

Heatwaves and drought over the summer have surely made us more aware of the preciousness of water, something that has long been acknowledged by all the world's main faiths.

Originating in the dry desert regions of the ancient Near East, the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam envisaged water as the sacred source of life. The well-known opening passage of Genesis describing the spirit of God moving over the face of the waters echoes similar depictions of the world's watery origins in earlier ancient creation myths. Scholars suggest that Yahweh, the tribal deity of the Hebrews adopted as the one true God when they became monotheists, was originally the rain god of the Assyrians. In Islam, Allah's throne is seen as being situated "upon the waters".

The belief that water provides a locus for human encounter with the divine, which led to Ancient Greeks and Romans venerating sacred hot springs, was taken up in the Bible where many of the "theophanies" in which God is revealed to humans take place near wells and springs. The Hebrew word, *ayin*, is used for both a spring and an eye, suggesting that where water bubbles up from the ground, there too is the eye of God. One of the most powerful stories in the New Testament tells of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman by a well and offering her the water of eternal life.

Rivers have a particular spiritual significance in many religious traditions. Hindus venerate the Ganges, or Mother Ganga as it is known after the goddess who gives it its name. One sip from it, or a bathe in its waters, takes away the sins of a lifetime. Many of our British rivers, including the Thames, Severn, Wharfe, Dee and Clyde, are named after Celtic goddesses, reinforcing a widespread primal connection between water and the feminine and a belief in rivers and streams as the dwelling place of deities who look after them.

For those who follow the religion of Taoism, which has been described as "the Watercourse Way", water is seen not just as the source of life, the mysterious female base from which Heaven and Earth sprang, but as a metaphor for the Tao, or way of life itself. Like the Tao, water has the character of quiet effortlessness and calm efficiency. Unaffected by what is going on above and around it, the river gets on with its business, which is simply to flow, sticking closely to the ground. For Taoists the strength of water lies in its weakness, fluidity, adaptability, humility and gentle persuasiveness.

A theological meditation by Martin Thornton, an Anglican priest, published in 1965 and entitled *The Rock and the River: An Encounter Between Traditional Spirituality and Modern Thought*, has stuck with me ever since I first read it. Thornton took the rock and the river as metaphors for two dominant and contrasting elements within Christianity: the rock, solid, firm and immoveable, signifying the conservative dogmatic element; and the river, never still, representing the radical stream. In his words, "The conventional churchman clings to the rock and lets the river scurry by, stopping his ears to its noise. The radical plunges into the river to be swept away by it."

Thornton suggested that Christianity needs the two together: the rock standing firm while the river flows out of it. I wonder whether today we could do with a little less rock and a little more river. We need stability but we also need flow and fluidity. The river will ultimately wear away the rock, picking up and carrying its minerals to enrich the land through which it passes on its way to the sea. Its apparent weakness, humility and steady flow is its strength.

Several philosophers and biologists have seen rivers as fulfilling a similar role on Earth to that performed by the blood that circulates through our bodies, which are themselves 90 per cent water. Viktor Schauberger, an Austrian forester and scientist, felt that humans have all but destroyed water's natural vitality and energy through deforestation, altering river courses, artificial treatment and pollution: "All around us we see the bridges of life collapsing, those capillaries which create all organic life. This dreadful disintegration has been caused by the mindless and mechanical work of man, who has wrenched the living soul from the Earth's blood water."

Whether or not we see water as having a "soul", there is now substantial agreement that we are suffering the consequences of taking it for granted, polluting and over-exploiting it and subjecting it to the effects of global warming. Environmentalists are calling for rivers to be accorded human-like legal rights. It is time to respect and cherish water again as our ancestors did, to learn its lessons of humility and flow, and perhaps to develop a more fluid faith.

Ian Bradley is emeritus professor of cultural and spiritual history at the University of St Andrews. His latest book, *Liquid Faith*, was published by Birlinn in July

Readers' Lives
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Ruth MacGillivray
Doctor with an interest in women's health and a love of limericks

Ruth MacGillivray, who died aged 94, appeared in The Times on Saturday June 21, 2025

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THE TIMES

Court Circular

Balmoral Castle
7th August, 2026

Mr Bernard Flannery was received by The King this morning at the Castle of Mey, Thurso, Caithness, when His Majesty invested him with the Insignia of a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order.

The King today visited Dingwall to mark its Eight Hundredth Anniversary as a Royal Burgh and was received at Cromarty Memorial Car Park by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty (Mrs Joanie Whiteford).

His Majesty met representatives from Dingwall Mart, winners of The King's Award for Voluntary Service and recipients of The King's Award for Enterprise, before viewing local business stalls and meeting representatives from Dingwall Fire Brigade Service and Dundonnell Mountain Rescue Team.

The King afterwards visited Dingwall Town Hall and, escorted by the Chairman of Dingwall Community Council (Mr Andrew MacIvor), met representatives of community groups, before proceeding onto the Town Hall Balcony and viewing a demonstration of Highland dance and a performance by young musicians from Fèis Rois.

Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: newsukadvertising.co.uk for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email BMDs@thetimes.co.uk

I JESUS have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. Revelation 22.16 (AV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

TOCINO BRADBURY on 26th June 2026 to Juan and John, a son, Albert John Christopher, known as Albi.

GEORGE on 3rd August 2026 to Tabitha (née Gray) and George, a daughter, Georgiana Penelope Danger.

HAMILTON on 25th July 2026 to Coco (née Carter) and Mossie, a daughter, Sophia Alice Charlotte.

HONE on 20th July 2026 to Lucy (née Karsten) and Joseph, twins, Sophie Victoria and Robert Alexander, siblings to Elizabeth Catherine.

LARKIN on 26th July 2026 to Kelly and Robin, a daughter, Olive Daisy.

Forthcoming Marriages

MR D. WILKINSON AND MISS L. H. KIRBY
The engagement is announced between David, youngest son of Colin and Linda Wilkinson of Kent, and Lydia, daughter of Tim Kirby and Louise & David McCann of Manchester, Cheshire.

MR T. J. N. ROBERTSON AND MISS S. O. A. KITSON
The engagement is announced between Tom, eldest son of Jon and Katherine Robertson of Barrowby, Lincolnshire, and Sabrina, only child of Janette and the late Peter Kitson of Balham, London.

DR J. J. LYLES AND DR T. A. KOLK
The engagement is announced between James, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Christopher Lyles of Wandsworth, London, and Tessel, daughter of Dr Herman Kolk and Prof Anne Schilder of Utrecht, the Netherlands, and Highgate, London.

MR R. J. F. CARBONI AND MISS N. M. C. MCERLEAN
The engagement is announced between Romilly, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Marius Carboni of Plaxtol, Kent, and Niamh, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs James McErlean of Knighton, Leicester.

MR H. L. JONES AND MISS C. H. ORCHARD
The engagement is announced between Huw, elder son of Mr Clifford Jones of Lukovištia, Slovakia and Mrs Claire Jones of Abersoch, Gwynedd, and Catherine, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Rupert Orchard of Grateley, Hampshire.

MR M. E. STALEY AND MISS N. J. RUTHERFORD
The engagement is announced between Max, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Nigel Staley of Broadstone, Shropshire, and Tash, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Mark Rutherford of Fulham, London.

Deaths

BAY
Madeleine (née Hayes) passed away on 26th July 2026, aged 84. Beloved wife of Rolf Egil Bay, mother of Helene and Christian, grandmother of Thomas, Axel, Eloise and Conor. Funeral service to be held at St Marylebone Crematorium on 19th August at 11am.

BOWMAN Yvonne on 17th July, aged 96. Dearly loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, will be sadly missed. Funeral service on Wednesday 19th August at Holy Trinity Church, Eridge TN3 9JG at 2pm. Parking available opposite the church. Family flowers only please but donations may be sent, payable to Hospice in the Weald, Pembury, c/o E. R. Hickmott & Son, tel 01892 522462, or direct to Hospice in the Weald.

KENT Helen (née Johnson) died peacefully on 22nd July 2026, aged 85. Beloved wife of the late Richard (Dickie) Kent, a much-loved auntie of Mark and Michael. Funeral service and burial at Greenacres, Epping Forest Burial Park, on Tuesday 25th August, midday, refreshments after. Family flowers only please, donations if desired to Fair Havens Hospice, Southend. Mark@msjic.com

MONTGOMERY Sir David died peacefully on 3rd August 2026 at home, Kinross. Private family burial only.

TAYLOR Sally died peacefully surrounded by family and friends on 18th July 2026, aged 64. Adored and cherished by her parents, Michael and Hazel (both deceased), and loved and admired so much by her brothers, Mark (deceased) and James. She came into this world with so little but gave so much.

Memorial Services

BEALE Anne Patricia Bride (née Kempton) at Christ The King, Lords Croft, Amesbury SP4 7EP on 14th September 2026 at 2pm. At Anne's request, no black. If you are able to attend, please email camillaeadie@gmail.com

In Memoriam — Private

ROUSHAM Johanna (née McLoughlin). Beautiful daughter of Liz and Terry. Adored Mama of Oliver and William, both now fine young men. Ten years missing you, darling girl. She is reunited with her Dad and her babies Jasmine, Max and Hanna Elizabeth. All forever loved.

The simple way to place your Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register. Available 24 hours a day. Go to: **newsukadvertising.co.uk**

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To place notices for these sections please call 020 7782 7553

Notices are subject to confirmation and should be received by 11.30am three days prior to insertion

Trustee Acts

NOTICE
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to S27 of the Trustee Act, 1925 that any person having a Claim against or an Interest in the Estate of any of the deceased persons whose names, addresses and descriptions are set out below is hereby required to send particulars in writing of his claim or interest to the person or persons mentioned in relation to the deceased person concerned before the date specified; after which date the estate of the deceased will be distributed by the personal representatives among the persons entitled thereto having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had a notice.
NICOL, Richard. Late of Elstob House Farm, Tunstall Road, Sunderland SR3 1AB, who died on 2nd June 2025 particulars to Ward Hadaway LLP, Sandgate House, 102 Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3DX (Ref: (PC)AF.SLD.NIC266.1) by 16th October 2026.

NOTICE
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to S27 of the Trustee Act, 1925 that any person having a Claim against or an Interest in the Estate of any of the deceased persons whose names, addresses and descriptions are set out below is hereby required to send particulars in writing of his claim or interest to the person or persons mentioned in relation to the deceased person concerned before the date specified; after which date the estate of the deceased will be distributed by the personal representatives among the persons entitled thereto having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had a notice.
BISHOP, Errol Simon Owen of King's Newnham Hall, King's Newnham Lane, King's Newnham, Rugby, Warks, CV23 0JT died on 03/03/2026, claims under s27 Trustee Act to Thomson Snell & Passmore, Heathervale House, 2-4 Vale Avenue, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1DJ, ref: 815278-0001, by 09/10/2026

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Day 3 - Monemvasia
Day 4 - Milos
Day 5 - Patmos
Day 6 - Chios
Day 7 - Pergamon
Day 8 - Day at sea
Day 9 - Istanbul
Day 10 - Istanbul
Day 11 - Return Home

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The Times Saturday Quiz Olav Bjortomt

1 Which vegetable is used to make French fries?

2 In 1756, Johan Zoffany painted the self-portrait *David with the Head of ...* which Philistine giant?

3 Which ballet term is Italian for "first ballerina"?

4 Which future US president married Nancy Davis in 1952?

5 What type of crab is named after a person who lives in seclusion?

6 In England and Wales, what is the next bank holiday after New Year's Day?

7 The coat of arms of Henry VII features which red Welsh emblem supporting the royal arms of England?

8 Barbara Windsor made her *Carry On* debut as agent Daphne Honeybutt in which 1964 film?

9 Which South American country sits on the largest proven oil reserves in the world?

10 Which Welsh band had a 1969 No 1 single with *(If Paradise Is) Half as Nice*?

11 Who was the second housemate, who has been a *This Morning* presenter since 2021, to be evicted from *Big Brother* series three in 2002?

12 Which space tourism company was founded in 2004 by Richard Branson?

13 Malcolm Lowry's 1947 novel *Under the Volcano* is set during which annual festival in Mexico?

20

ALAMY

14 Which Polish-American businesswoman had huge success with the moisturising cream Valaze (she claimed the name was Hungarian for "gift from heaven")?

15 Which Australian-born cartoonist (1887-1970) drew *The Man Who ...* series for Punch magazine?

16 Reported in 1962, what was the first X-ray source to be discovered outside of our solar system?

17 Who became the first president of Dahomey (now Benin) when the country gained independence from France in 1960?

18 How many points does a try score in rugby union?

19 Which England cricketer was the only fielder to run out Don Bradman in Tests — at Adelaide in 1928-29?

20 Which natural limestone arch on the Jurassic Coast is pictured?

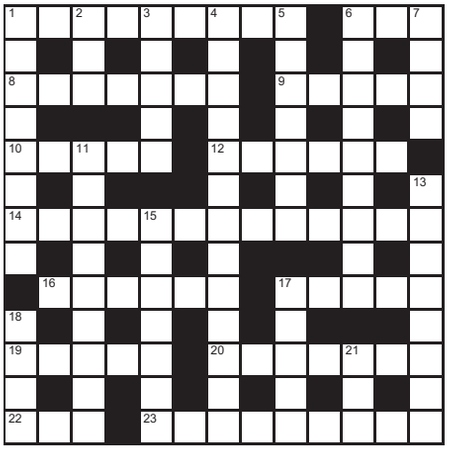
Answers below right

Last week's O Tempora! solution

S	T	A	T	U	I	S	S	E	S	A	X	A		
C	■	G	■	N	■	I	■	R	■	L	■	P		
A	T	R	O	X	■	G	E	R	M	A	N	I		
L	■	I	■	I	■	N	■	O	■	■	■	C		
A	R	C	E	S	U	A	■	R	I	P	A	E		
E	■	O	■	S	■	G	■	■	■	R	■	S		
■	■	L	A	E	T	E	D	A	B	O	■	■		
P	A	■	■	S	M	■	S	■	R	■	■	■		
A	G	M	E	N	■	S	U	P	R	E	M	A		
R	■	■	E	■	I	■	L	■	O	■	D	■		
A	D	S	U	M	U	S	■	I	T	U	R	I		
B	■	U	■	S	■	O	■	O	■	U	■	■		
O	R	B	I	S	T	E	R	R	A	R	U	M		

O Tempora! Crossword DLXVI by Balatro

A weekly crossword for the classically minded



Clues, which may be straight or mildly cryptic, always lead to answers in Latin

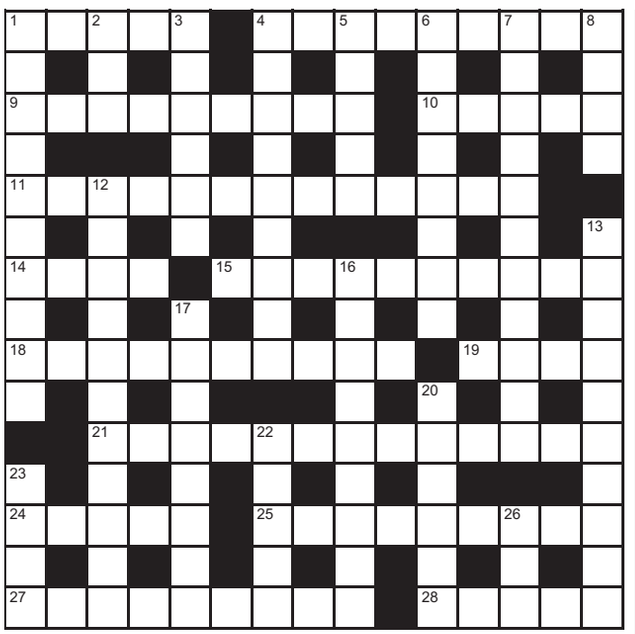
Across

1 In ___, in the vicinity, nearby (9)
6 Animal in fronte muscipuli reclusum (3)
8 Frisky, skittish (of a she-goat, vide Ecl. 2.64) (7)
9 Praesente Marco perturbato (5)
10 I learn — dancing? (5)
12 Earth, terra, solum (6)
14 If you want to be loved, love! (Sen. Ep. 1.9.6) (2,3,5,3)
16 Bestiola maior quam vespa potentiorique aculeo praedita (6)
17 "Eam hinc abduxti?" "Non ___"; Have you taken her from here? I haven't carried [her] off! (Pl. Rud. 862) (5)
19 Timui, pavi, formidavi (5)
20 To be booed off stage (of the tragedian Aesopus, Cic. Orat. 1.259) (7)
22 Without one you rush to the country (3)
23 Manoeuvrable, versatile (of warships, has omnes ___ imperat fieri, B.G 5.1) (9)

Down

1 Marshy (gen. s), ___ fecunda licentia Nili (Stat. Silv. 3.2.108) (8)
2 Saturni uxor, Rhea (3)
3 Extemplo, protinus, statim (5)
4 As far as is possible (7,6)
5 Cur solo perturbatus basio? (7)
6 Summissa voce loqui, mussare (9)
7 Identical? Alternative name of Cephallenia (4)
11 Disputandi ___, strictness of debate, vide Cic. Fin. 3.1 (9)
13 Tace nisi componatur coma senilis! (8)
15 Fluvius Britannicus longissimus qui montibus e Cambricis per Glevum fluit (7)
17 Via Italica longissima quae Romam Brundisio tendebat (5)
18 Liquor qui medio e tumore emanat (4)
21 I'll go back — you face up! (3)

Times Crossword No 29,616



A £20 Waterstones gift voucher will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened on Thursday. Enter by post to: Times Crossword No 29,616, PO Box 2164, Colchester, Essex CO2 8LJ, or by email to: prize@thetimes.co.uk, with "Crossword 29616" in the subject line. Open to 18+, UK & ROI residents only. Winners and solutions will appear on Monday week.

Name/Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Across

1 With eleven in the box, is one intent on defence? (5)
4 Fraud cases from Iraqi city disturbed trustee (9)
9 Tricky writing name on second pair of underpants (9)
10 Pound to put each way, small stakes gambling (5)
11 Evidence soldier provided first in establishing rank (13)
14 When cycling, bump in the road is always annoying (4)
15 Unsuitable rooms appal cooks (10)
18 Last bits of malt whisky in a bottle show maturity (3,4,3)
19 Very short motorway towards the centre is unfinished (4)
21 Later note debutante wearing pink give thumbs up to ensemble (5,2,6)
24 Tree golf club lopped fell during round (5)
25 Spooner's only granny who didn't quite make it? (6,3)
27 Nothing yielded by inamorata before viewing room (9)
28 Pop-up ad revolted housing minister (5)

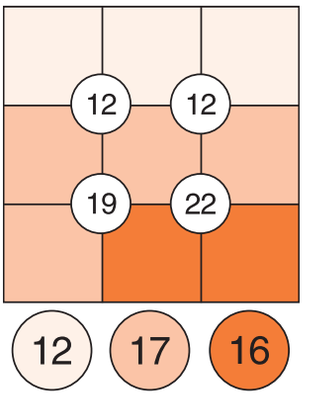
Down

1 Daughter in prison treated by psychiatrist quick to offer opinion (10)
2 Latin matters for language students taking their finals (3)
3 Eg split trousers in use again for the present (6)
4 Blonde's good-looking? Only just, I suppose (5,4)
5 Strict rules make old lady bored by golf (5)
6 Your flipping dog is on top of mine (8)
7 Nail net up at ground before match (11)
8 Casual greeting from slangy youngsters (4)
12 Sir's unenthusiastic by the sound of it, teaching after hours (5,6)
13 Relief because case isn't complicated (10)
16 All good parts celebrated in later life (9)
17 Model or muse of the Beatles, say (8)
20 Hammer essential for building work (6)
22 Seeing that act described in confession drained constable (5)
23 Member left half of drink (4)
26 Stop running around in a frenzy (3)

Yesterday's solution 29,615

M	I	F	F	■	I	L	L	A	U	D	A	B	L	E
I	■	E	■	F	■	O	■	I	■	E	■	L	■	E
S	U	N	B	A	T	H	E	R	■	F	R	A	I	L
C	■	C	■	B	■	E	■	E	■	Y	■	C	■	Y
O	V	E	R	R	U	N	■	D	R	I	N	K	S	■
N	■	■	■	I	■	G	■	■	■	N	■	S	■	C
D	U	A	L	C	A	R	R	I	A	G	E	W	A	Y
U	■	M	■	■	■	I	■	R	■	■	■	A	■	C
C	O	N	F	R	O	N	T	A	T	I	O	N	A	L
T	■	E	■	O	■	■	■	S	■	M	■	■	■	O
■	O	S	T	L	E	R	■	C	U	P	O	L	A	S
W	■	T	■	L	■	E	■	I	■	A	■	I	■	T
H	A	I	T	I	■	C	A	B	A	L	L	E	R	O
A	■	E	■	C	■	A	■	L	■	E	■	G	■	M
M	U	D	S	K	I	P	P	E	R	■	H	E	B	E

Sakuro No 4815



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct.

Solution *MindGames in Saturday Review*

Quiz answers 1 Potato 2 Goliath 3 Prima ballerina 4 Ronald Reagan 5 Hermit crab 6 Good Friday 7 Dragon 8 *Carry On Spying* 9 Venezuela 10 Amen Corner 11 Alison Hammond 12 Virgin Galactic 13 Day of the Dead or *Día de los Muertos* 14 Helena Rubinstein 15 HM Bateman 16 Scorpius X-1 or Sco X-1. Riccardo Giacconi led the team that discovered it 17 Hubert Maga 18 Five 19 Jack Hobbs 20 Durdle Door.

Concise Quintagram answers 1 Gnash 2 Moored 3 Thirst 4 Eminent 5 Carousel.

Tap.
Tap.
Tap.
Tap.
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THE TIMES

Saturday August 8 2026

Results day The rules for stressed parents
Plus Easy, foolproof baking: the cheat's guide

Weekend

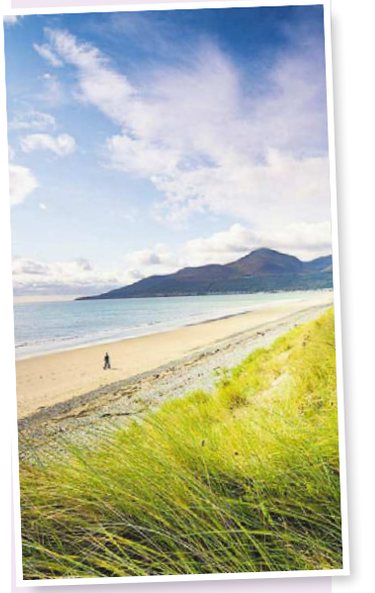
Travel starts on page 33

37 tastiest foods to buy now

What the experts always include in their weekly shop

Giulia Crouch, a judge of the Great Taste awards

Summer walks guide



For families and hardcore hikers

Best cheese, jam, tea, sauces

The country's top foodies sampled hundreds of products for the Great Taste awards 2026. The judge and food writer Giulia Crouch selects the cream of the crop

When it comes to food, I'm always on the lookout for the very best of something — the best butter, the most exceptional raspberry jam, an intensely moreish hot sauce. Luckily the annual Great Taste awards make that easier.

Producers send in their products to be blind taste-tested by panels of experts, including chefs, food writers and other specialists. Winning products receive one, two or three stars.

I was a judge this year for the first time and the way a veteran judge explained three stars to me was that "you don't just want to buy it, you also want to tell everyone you know about it".

But it's not easy to win three stars. In fact, as John Farrand, the managing director of the Guild of Fine Food (the organisation that runs the awards), says: "Each year, roughly 2 per cent of entrants achieve a three-star rating. This year there were 306, out of more than 15,000 hopeful products."

The judging is taken very seriously. "It's a unique environment," he says. "Each product is blind-tasted and assessed on its own merit. We don't judge one thing against another, therefore avoiding comparison, and we don't take any extraneous details into consideration — packaging and marketing are completely irrelevant."

Many products don't receive a star at all — in fact, 60 per cent of entrants don't, Farrand says. "Every producer who has been awarded a star should feel incredibly proud."

If you want the crème de la crème, here are my picks of the exceptional products that were awarded an elusive three stars this year. All of these hidden gems are available for delivery online or are in big stores.

Giulia Crouch

The best cheese and butter

The English Pecorino
White Lake Cheese

A wonderfully complex, sweet, nutty and umami cheese that's a personal favourite of mine. I love the texture — toothsome yet not crumbly or dry.
£13.41 for 275g, whitelake.co.uk

Finest Pur Brebis ewe's milk cheese with truffle
Tesco

Not one but *four* of Tesco's cheeses have been awarded three stars this year. This one has a fantastic truffle flavour and buttery mouthfeel.
£4.50 for 160g, tesco.com

Cyprus Village halloumi
OliveOlive

A goat's milk halloumi crafted traditionally in Cyprus with a gentle tang, bouncy texture and just the right amount of salt.
£6.99 for 250g, oliveolive.co.uk

Blue Shropshire
Tesco

Creamy, crumbly and tangy — but not too strong as far as blues go — this is a winner.
£3.15 for 180g, tesco.com

Royal Bassett blue
Brinkworth Dairy

A creamy, soft blue cheese with a good tang and notes of cut grass and cloves.
£8.10 for 160g, brinkworthdairy.co.uk

Finest Langres soft cheese
Tesco

A melt-in-the-mouth, oozy French cheese with a striking orange rind.
£3.50 for 180g, tesco.com

Spenwood
Village Maid Cheese

A hard sheep's cheese that has similarities with pecorino, manchego and even Parmigiano Reggiano because of its nutty, sweet and savoury elements.
£10.50 for 250g, villagemaidcheese.co.uk

Finest manchego
Tesco

One of the best manchegos you can buy. Seriously tasty with the characteristic sweetness and nuttiness.
£4.65 for 175g, tesco.com

Salted cultured butter
Ampersand Dairy

Cultured butter has live bacteria added to it before churning, which results in a more tangy taste compared with regular butter. This one is exceptional with a wonderful richness and a super buttery taste.
£6 for 200g. ampersanddairy.com

Deluxe West Country butter with sea salt crystals
Lidl

I have long rated this butter. It has the perfect amount of crunchy salt crystals running through it and the butter itself is creamy and milky.
£2.29 for 250g, lidl.co.uk

Belhaven smoked butter
Belhaven Smokehouse

A smoky, oaky, creamy, salted cultured butter. An exceptional product.
£7.50 for 180g, belhavensmokehouse.co.uk

The best meat and fish

Proper Posh black treacle extra thick cut streaky bacon
The Jolly Hog

Proper, thick-cut streaky bacon cured in black treacle for a sweet, smoky, umami bite. This is irresistible.
£4 for 180g, ocado.com

Rib-eye steak
Lidgate Butcher

A succulent, marbled, grass-fed steak from a five-generation family butcher that only uses high-welfare meat.
£29.29 for 280g, lidgates.com

Rosendale wagyu short ribs
Tom Hixson of Smithfield

These luxurious wagyu short ribs are from cows that are fed high-quality grain and chocolate — that's right, chocolate. This creates a sweet finish to the savoury, umami and melting meat.
£43.95 for 1.8kg, tomhixson.co.uk

COVER: MICHAEL LECKIE FOR THE TIMES. BELOW: GEMMA DAY FOR THE TIMES; GETTY IMAGES

Tesco Finest cheeses

Hembridge Organics raspberry jam

Hampshire smoked trout fillet
Butler Country Estates Limited

Beautiful trout caught in crystal-clear streams smoked with an aromatic mix of apple, oak and hickory.
£4.10 for 50-99g, butler-country-estates.co.uk

Maldon cure smoked salmon
Lambton & Jackson

Fabulous, dry-cured and gently smoked with a delicate flavour.
£12 for 200g, lambtonandjackson.com

Beef bourguignon
Cook

If you're looking for a ready-made meal this is one of the best you can get. Tender meat, succulent mushrooms, caramelised baby onions and plenty of merlot, it's as good as homemade.
£12 for 540g, cookfood.net

The great taste test by experts

The best spreads

Original Roast smooth peanut butter
ManiLife

This peanut butter brand is unparalleled — creamy, rich and nutty with the perfect amount of salt. The only thing is, who's buying smooth? Not me. If you want the really good stuff, I suggest picking deep roast rather than original for a richer, more savoury flavour.
£4 for 275g, sainsburys.com

Raspberry jam
Hembridge Organics

Packed with English organic raspberries, this jam is truly special.
£4.25 for 235g, hembridgeorganics.co.uk

Jarrah Honey
The Rare Honey Company

An Australian honey with a toffee-like texture and incredible aroma. It's from the rare jarrah tree.
£20 for 260g, therarehoneycompany.co.uk

Matcha green tea

Summer citrus marmalade Italian orange bitters
The Artisan Kitchen

Containing four types of citrus (Valencia oranges, pink grapefruit, lemons and limes), this marmalade has a hint of an Aperol spritz about it thanks to the orange bitters. A sophisticated Mediterranean twist on the norm.
£6.99 for 200g, theartisankitchen.co.uk

The best tea, coffee, hot chocolate and matcha

Sichuan chilli chai
Big Tea

A warming, calming, tingly chai with a Sichuan edge. On a rooibos base so naturally caffeine-free, it combines ginger, cardamon and cinnamon with two kinds of Sichuan pepper.
£12.99 for 15 tea bags, bigteateas.com

Espresso Lorenzo ground espresso
Coffee Care

This intense, rich coffee blend has beautiful notes of dark chocolate and nutty, malty caramel.
£9.15 for 277g, coffeecare.co.uk

Ethiopian Gotiti washed coffee
Monsoon Estates Coffee Co

A bright, zingy, fruity and floral coffee with notes of blueberry and jasmine. This is my favourite style of coffee to drink black, to truly enjoy all the wonderful, enlivening flavours.
£9.50 for 227g, monsoonestates.co.uk

72 per cent extra dark hot chocolate flakes
Knoops

Knoops, a hot chocolate bar, opened on Kensington High Street in London some years ago. It was exceptional then and now it has expanded to many branches, as well as selling its hot chocolate flakes for you to buy at home. The 72 per cent, I think, is the perfect percentage — bitter and deeply chocolatey while still retaining a little sweetness.
£13.50 for 250g, knoops.com

Kyoto Saemidori unsweetened matcha
Matchado

I'm always on the search for good matcha as the difference between a good and a bad one is vast. This one has exceptional smoothness and flavour, with floral notes and gentle umami.
£41 for 30g, matchado.co.uk

The best ice cream

Hazelnut gelato
Baboo Gelato

This organic milk ice cream crafted in Dorset uses 100 per cent pure hazelnut paste from Piedmont — the home of hazelnuts. The producers tasted at least 20 hazelnut pastes before settling on the one they chose.
£7.50 for 500ml, baboogelato.com

Chocolate Guinness cake ice cream
Jude's Ice Cream

Chocolate Guinness cake-flavoured ice cream is a genius idea. A deeply chocolatey, sumptuous ice cream with the malty, comforting flavour of Guinness running through it. Wonderful.
£3.75 down from £5.85 for 470ml, Waitrose

The best condiments and sauces

Soy bean doubanjiang
Poon's Pantry

I love everything from Poon's Pantry, and this fermented soy bean mix doesn't let the side down. It's complex with umami, spicy, sweet and smoky notes and is fantastic in a stir-fry.
£7 for 160g, ocado.com

Baboo hazelnut gelato

Pomegranate molasses
Odysea

An essential for your pantry. This pomegranate molasses is like liquid sunshine — it's sweet, deep, syrupy, tangy and tart and will transform your marinades and dressings.
£4.15 for 250ml, sainsburys.com

Balsamic vinegar of Modena IGP
Bona Food

A lot of supermarket balsamic is a watery, sweet mess but this one from Bona Food is the real deal from Modena. Sweet, sharp and delicious.
£13.50 for 250ml, bonafood.co.uk

Obsidian chilli oil
Big Ginger Sauce Co

I love crunchy chilli oils like this that are packed with nuts and seeds as well as spice. Extremely moreish and with great heat.
£9, *biggingersauce.com*

Red Shift smoked gochujang sriracha
The Spice Must Flow

A complex and addictive hot sauce with a mix of fermented chillies, smoked garlic, onions, gochujang and ghost chilli.
£7.50 for 150ml, *thespicemustflow.space*

Gochujang by Sungchang Moon okrye
Jungdam

A traditional gochujang — spicy fermented Korean red pepper paste. This one is fermented for over a year whereas mass-market ones are often only fermented for a couple of months. This creates a whole new depth of flavour.
£19.99 for 450g, jungdam.co.uk

Red pesto with truffle
Phoenix Truffle

Using real black summer truffle, this red pesto offers a gorgeous, authentic flavour — none of that fake truffle taste. Handmade in Italy, creamy and vibrant.
180g for £13.50, phoenixtruffle.com

The best pastry and cakes

Yorkshire brack
Just Delicious

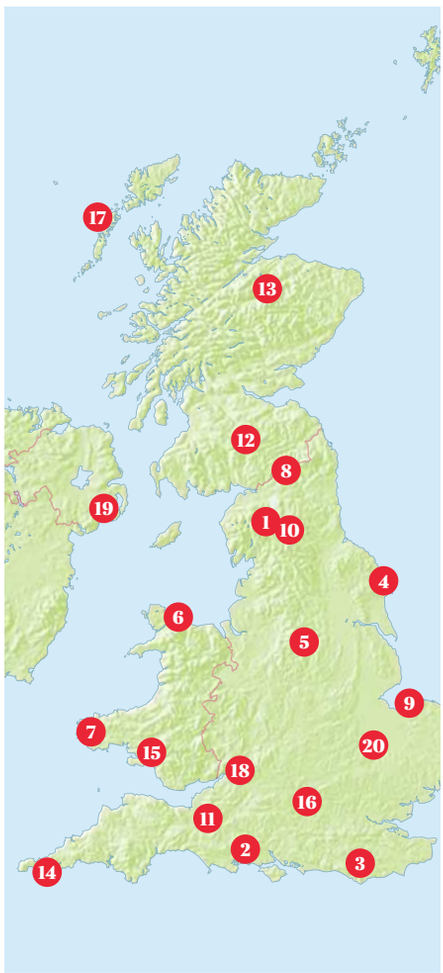
This traditional loaf cake is handmade in North Yorkshire with Yorkshire tea, brown sugar and lots of dried fruit.
£5.25 for 500g, just-delicious.co.uk

All butter sweet shortcrust pastry
Dorset Pastry

Finding good ready-made pastry is hard but this one is a winner. Properly buttery and made with all-natural ingredients.
£3.99 for 3.25g, dorsetpastry.com

The summer walks guide

Escape the August crowds and immerse yourself in nature. Walks experts Jen and Sim Benson share their favourite rural hikes



1. Swindale Cumbria

2. Holt Heath Dorset

3. River Cuckmere East Sussex

4. Bempton East Yorkshire

5. Longshaw Derbyshire

6. Llanddona Anglesey

7. Marloes peninsula Pembrokeshire

8. Bakethin Northumberland

9. Snettisham Norfolk

10. Crosby Garrett Fell Cumbria

11. Collard Hill Somerset

12. Loch Skeen Dumfries & Galloway

13. Loch Garten Highland

14. Mullion Cornwall

15. Felindre Powys

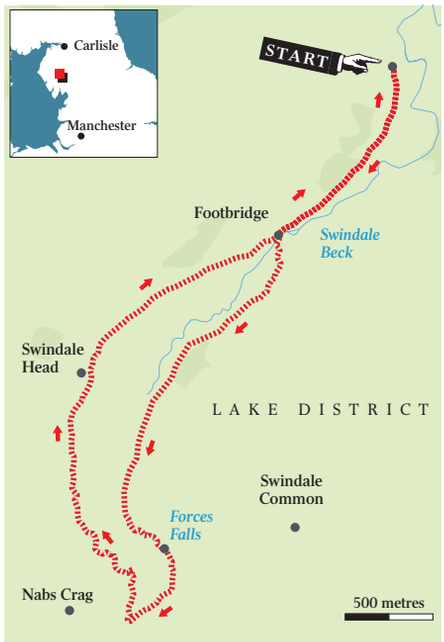
16. Binfield Heath Oxfordshire

17. Aird an Rùnair Western Isles

18. Rodborough Common Gloucestershire

19. Murlough Co Down

20. Fen Drayton Cambridgeshire



1 Swindale, Cumbria

How hard is it? 5½ miles; challenging; valley paths, section beside waterfall is steep

Since taking over management of Swindale in the Lake District in 2012, the RSPB has reinstated the snaking meanders of Swindale Beck, straightened about 200 years ago to the detriment of its wildlife and communities downstream. Now salmon spawn, dippers bob, otters fish and flood risk is reduced. Explore this peaceful valley in the eastern Lakes, walking below the imposing faces of Gouther Crag and Nabs Crag and climbing past spectacular Forces Falls.

Map OS Explorer OL5

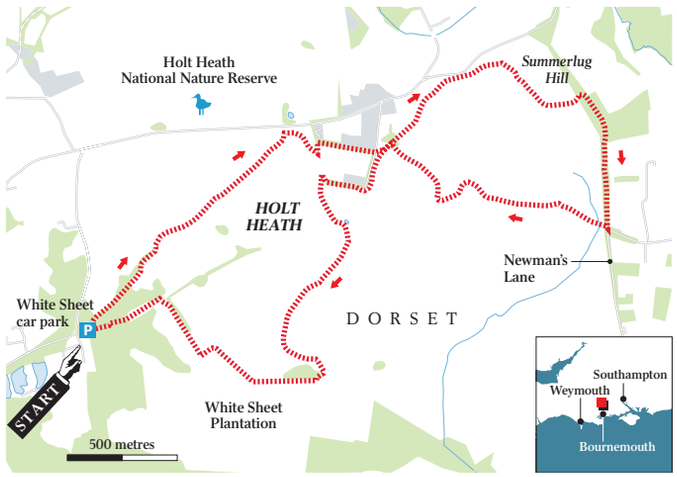
Start Swindale Lane, Shap, CA10 2QT (NY521141)

Getting there Trains to Penrith, bus to Shap, walk to route via Keld (2½ miles each way). Road: minor roads west of A6 and Shap. Please park considerately.

Walk Follow Swindale Lane to footbridge and footpath on left. Cross Swindale Beck then follow path right, below Gouther Crag and up valley to footbridge below waterfalls. Cross and follow path steeply up past Forces Falls and right to bridleway (BW) below Nabs Crag (NY506110). Turn right onto BW, staying left of Swindale Beck to top of road at Swindale Head. Follow road back down valley to finish.

Lunch The Mardale Inn, Bampton, CA10 2RQ (01931 719202, themardaleinn.com)

More information Lake District National Park (lakedistrict.gov.uk)



20 beautiful routes in the UK

OLIVER HLAVATY, DAVID BOAG/ALAMY

The Litlington White Horse in East Sussex

3 River Cuckmere, East Sussex

How hard is it? 6½ miles; easy to moderate; river paths

Follow the meandering River Cuckmere from historic Alfriston through the chalk downland of the Sussex Weald. Pass Litlington, with its diminutive Norman church, and the 19th-century white horse on High and Over Hill. Spot adonis and chalkhill blue butterflies feeding on horseshoe vetch, sunbathing adders and lizards, and rare green-winged orchids. The coast at Seven Sisters is a haven for birds, including the enigmatic spoonbill. Finish here or follow the South Downs Way back to Alfriston.

Adonis blue butterfly

Map OS Explorer OL25
Start Sloe Lane car park, Alfriston, BN26 5UP (TQ520032)
Finish Seven Sisters Country Park visitor centre, Exceat, BN25 4AD (TV518994)
Getting there Trains to Seaford then buses to Alfriston (start) or Exceat (finish). Road: Alfriston is on minor road between A27 (north) and A259 coastal road. Exceat is on A259 east of Seaford.
Walk South through Alfriston to junction at High St. Turn left onto South Downs Way (SDW) over River Cuckmere. Continue to Litlington where SDW turns left. Leave SDW and continue downstream to Exceat Bridge. With river to your right follow footpath (FP) downstream to Cuckmere Haven. Follow FP left along coast and uphill to rejoin SDW on Haven Brow. Turn left back to Exceat (car park, bus stop and visitor centre). Return by bus or take the South Downs Way (10 miles total).
Lunch The Plough & Harrow, Litlington, BN26 5RE (01323 870632, ploughandharrowlitlington.co.uk)
More information Discover Sussex (discoversussex.org)

2 Holt Heath, Dorset

How hard is it? 5 miles; easy; level heath and boardwalk

Holt Heath Nature Reserve

This walk explores one of Dorset's largest areas of biodiverse lowland heath. Spot intriguing plants including bog asphodel and sundew; elusive birds including Dartford warbler and nightjar; and all six of Britain's reptile species: adders, grass snakes, common lizards, slow worms, smooth snakes and sand lizards.
Map OS Explorer OL22 and 118
Start White Sheet car park, BH21 7DB (SU047036)
Getting there Trains to Bournemouth. X6 bus stop at Pynes Close, West Moors, follow Newman's Lane to join route. Road: north of Ferndown and A31 or west of B3072 from Three Legged Cross.
Walk Follow bridleway (BW) through woods onto heath. Continue on BW across heath to path junction before road. Turn right onto BW. Turn left then right between paddocks and back onto heath to path junction. Bear left along edge of heath, then right, south of Summerlug Hill. Turn right to Newman's Lane then right onto path and boardwalk across heath to rejoin outbound path. Turn left and left again following path around paddocks to junction. Turn left on BW south to White Sheet Plantation. Turn right to car park.
Lunch Gullivers Farm Shop and Kitchen, West Moors, Ferndown, BH22 0JG (gulliversfarmshop.co.uk)
More information Visit Dorset (visit-dorset.com)

4 Bempton Cliffs, East Yorkshire

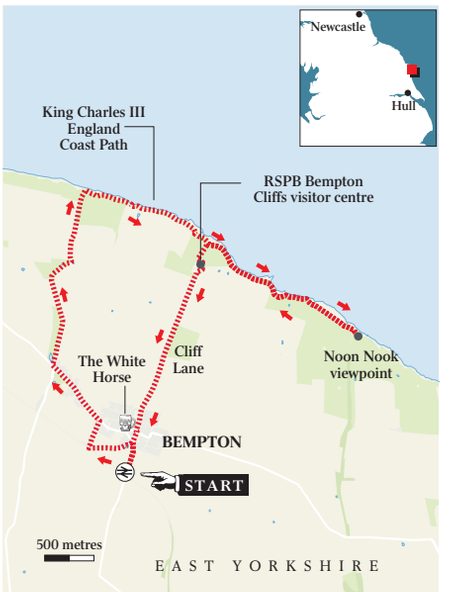
How hard is it? 7 miles; moderate; undulating coastal path

About half a million seabirds gather on Bempton Cliffs between March and August. Along the clifftops, this walk offers a vantage point for spotting puffins, gannets, kittiwakes and guillemots. Walking through the fields further inland on Flamborough Head, look for corn buntings, skylarks, linnets and, if you're walking at dusk, barn owls gliding over the fields.
Map OS Explorer 301
Start Bempton railway station, YO15 1HN (TA190717)
Getting there Train to Bempton. Road: on B1229, east of A165 Scarborough to Bridlington road. Parking in Bempton or at RSPB visitor centre (YO15 1JF).

Bempton Cliffs

Walk Follow Newsham Hill Lane towards Bempton. Turn left before road junction, pass The Mere taking footpath (FP) across fields to Bolam Lane. Turn right on lane then left on Main Street. Turn right onto Hoddy Cows Lane, continuing on FP across fields to King Charles III England Coast Path (CP). Turn right, follow CP east above Bempton Cliffs to Noon Nook viewpoint (TA213731). Return on outbound route to RSPB visitor centre. Follow Cliff Lane back through Bempton to station.
Lunch The White Horse, High St, Bempton, YO15 1HB (01262 850266, facebook.com/BemptonPub)
More information RSPB (rspb.org.uk)

More walks next page

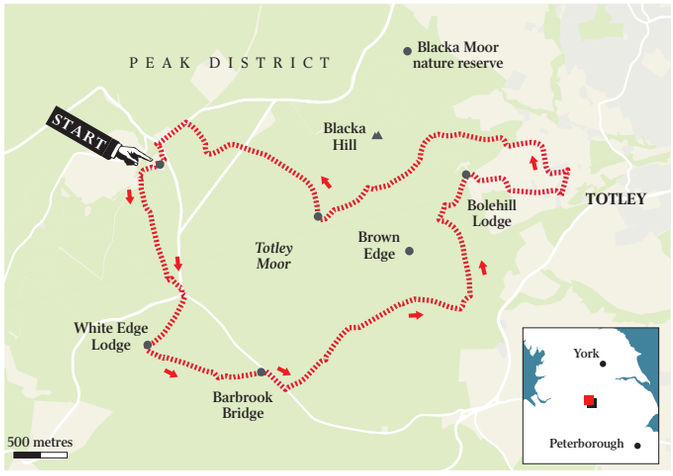


Lakeside trails, wildflowers and beaches

5 Longshaw and Totley Moor, Derbyshire

How hard is it? 8 miles; challenging; hilly but not too steep, moorland paths

Walk through the Longshaw estate for Peak District views from Totley Moor. Return through Blacka Moor reserve, over 180 hectares of woodland, bog and heathland, listening for willow and grasshopper warblers, curlew and snipe.
Map OS Explorer OL24 and OL1
Start National Trust Longshaw estate, S11 7TZ (SK266800)
Getting there Train to Grindleford, walk up through Longshaw estate to join route. Or buses from Sheffield, alight at Fox House. Road: A6187 between Sheffield and Hathersage, follow brown signs. Several car park options.
Walk Follow path downhill, turn left behind Longshaw Lodge past Little John's Well to road junction. Cross and bear right on bridleway (BW) to White Edge Lodge. Take next left on footpath (FP) across White Edge Moor to B6054 at Barbrook Bridge. Turn right following road, then left through gate onto moor. Follow path across moor bearing right at junction over Brown Edge (cairn). Descend to path junction at SK292789, left to Moss Road (BW), right then left onto Lane Head Road. Turn left onto Strawberry Lee Lane to car park, bearing right into Blacka Moor Nature Reserve and uphill to gate. Follow FP left, signed Longshaw. Take next right to Stony Ridge Road. Cross, follow FP to A6187 and left back to Longshaw.
Lunch Longshaw Café, Woodcroft car park, S11 7TZ (nationaltrust.org.uk)
More information Visit Peak District and Derbyshire (visitpeakdistrict.com)



7 Marloes Peninsula, Pembrokeshire

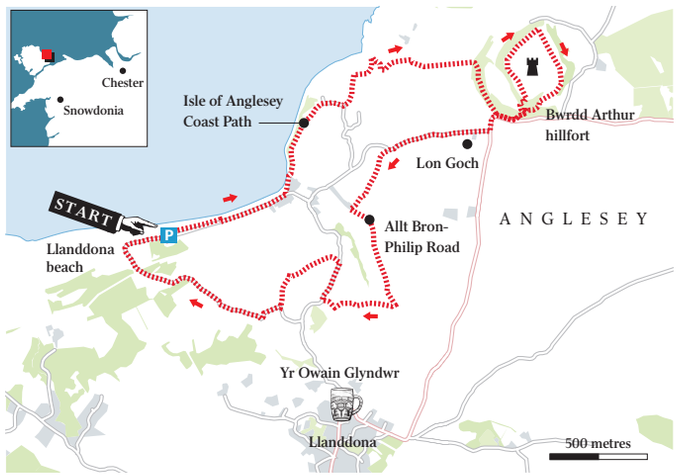
How hard is it? 5 miles; moderate; clear trails with some steep sections

On Pembrokeshire's westernmost edge, the Marloes cliffs are interspersed with beaches. Start at the site of Marloes Mere, home to hen harriers and short-eared owls, heading to the coast for St Brides Bay. Pass Martin's Haven, finishing above Marloes Sands.
Map OS Explorer OL36
Start Marloes Sands car park, SA62 3BH (SM779081)
Getting there Trains to Haverfordwest, then 315 Puffin Shuttle to Marloes (May to September). Road: minor roads signed from B4327 and Haverfordwest. National Trust car park.
Walk Head north out of car park and left at T-junction. Follow road past Trehill Farm taking footpath (FP) right across fields to join Pembrokeshire Coast Path (PCP). Turn left on PCP to Martin's Haven beach then inland on road into Deer Park on right. Follow FP right to lookout station then downhill and right onto Wooltack Point. Follow coast around Deer Park and through gate back onto PCP above Deadman's Bay. Continue on PCP southeast past Gateholm Island to signed left hand gate above Marloes Sands. Follow FP across fields, right past Runwayskiln café and left to finish.
Lunch Runwayskiln, Marloes Sands, SA62 3BH (01646 636545, runwayskiln.co.uk)
More information Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (pembrokeshirecoast.wales)

6 Llanddona and Bwrdd Arthur, Anglesey

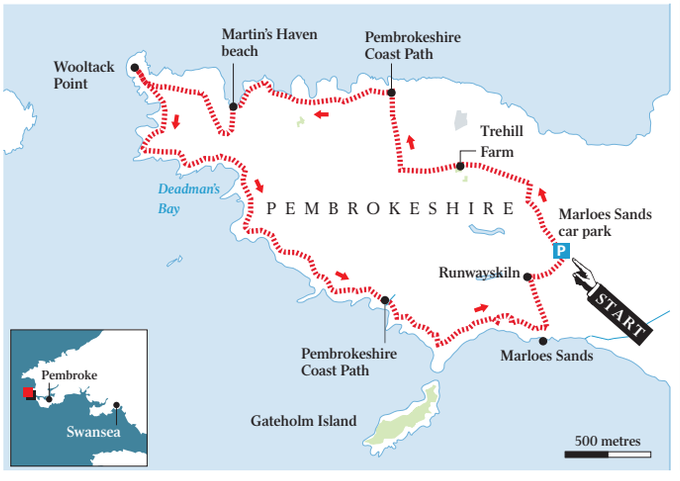
How hard is it? 5 miles; moderate; coast path, lanes and country footpaths

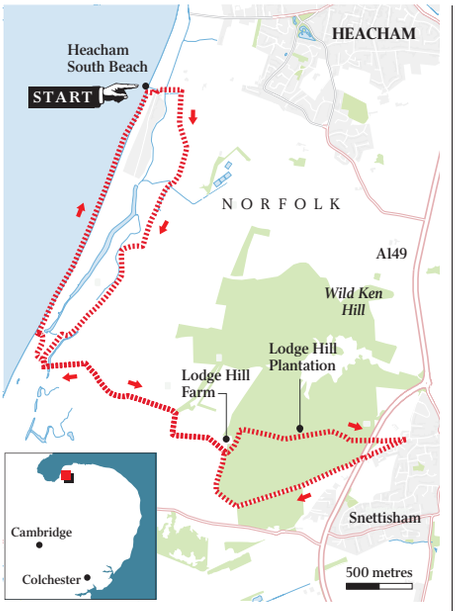
Llanddona edges Anglesey's northeast coast. The beach makes a fantastic walk when the tide's out, or follow the Wales Coast Path to Bwrdd Arthur (Arthur's Table), making it up the limestone slopes where frog orchids and hoary rockrose bloom in summer. St Michael's church stands to the east of the Iron Age hillfort. Descend to Red Wharf Bay.
Map OS Explorer 263
Start Llanddona Beach car park, LL58 8UW (SH567806)
Getting there Train to Bangor. Bus to Llanddona via Beaumaris or Menai Bridge. Join route via lane. Road: minor roads to eastern Anglesey. Beach road is steep, park in Llanddona and walk.
Walk With sea on left follow coast path (CP) along beach road, across fields and uphill through woodland to path junction on heath (SH578814). Leave CP, continue on footpath (FP) to base of Bwrdd Arthur hillfort. Turn right, follow FP up to trig point, returning through gate to road. Turn right on road, then right onto Lon Goch. Continue to FP (track) on left, then left onto byway, then sharp right to Allt Bron-Philip Road. Follow road right then signed FP left to road. Turn right, follow road steeply down to beach, turn right for beach car park.
Lunch Yr Owain Glyndwr, Llanddona, LL58 8UF (01248 810710)
More information Visit Anglesey (visitanglesey.co.uk)



RON EVANS/ALAMY

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path at Marloes Sands





9 Wild Ken Hill and Snettisham, Norfolk

How hard is it? 8 miles; moderate; flat

This walk links the coast at Heacham with Snettisham. Look out for black hoopoes, black-winged stilts and the golden oriole, an effectively extinct species in the UK.
Map OS Explorer 250
Start Heacham South Beach, PE31 7LH (TF661368)
Getting there Train to King's Lynn, bus to Heacham. Road: off the A149 between King's Lynn and Hunstanton.
Walk Follow South Beach Road, turning right onto King Charles III England Coast Path (CP). At path junction (TF653347) left, follow footpath (FP) to western edge of Lodge Hill Plantation. Turn left on FP through wood cross A149 and follow FP opposite to road. Turn right following Common Road and recrossing A149. Follow FP then bridleway alongside common and over Lodge Hill to junction near Lodge Hill Farm. Turn left, following FP back to coast. Rejoin outward route or return along beach.
Lunch The Old Bank, Snettisham (01485 544080, theoldbankbistro.co.uk)
More information Visit Norfolk (visitnorfolk.co.uk)

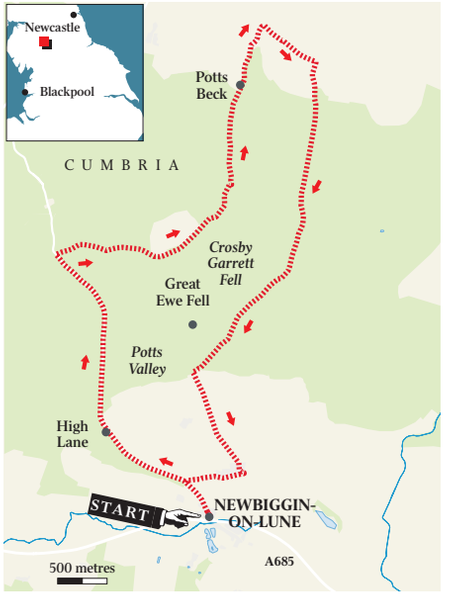
A black-winged stilt

10 Crosby Garrett Fell, Cumbria

How hard is it? 7½ miles; moderate

Crosby Garrett Fell sits between the Lakes, the Dales, the Howgills and the North Pennines. Climb from Newbiggin-on-Lune for grand views of High Cup Nick and Wild Boar Fell. Walk alongside Potts Beck. There is an optional detour to Nettle Hill.
Map OS Explorer OL19
Start High Lane, Newbiggin-on-Lune, CA17 4NY (NY703053)
Getting there Train to Oxenholme (25 minutes by taxi) or Kirkby Stephen (10 min by taxi), but no buses. Road: off A685 between M6 at Tebay and Kirkby Stephen. Parking along High Lane.
Walk Follow High Lane away from A685 for almost 2 miles to signed footpath (FP) on right. Follow FP across moor, curving left into Potts Valley downstream to edge of fields and path junction (NY708097). Turn right, follow FP uphill then turn right onto Newclose Lane. Continue onto bridleway (BW) across Crosby Garrett Fell to path junction (NY702066) south of Great Ewe Fell. Turn right onto BW, then left on FP across fields to BW. Turn right past Brownber Hall back to High Lane.
Lunch The Black Swan at Ravenstonedale (blackswanhotel.com)
More information Yorkshire Dales National Park (yorkshiredales.org.uk)

More walks next page

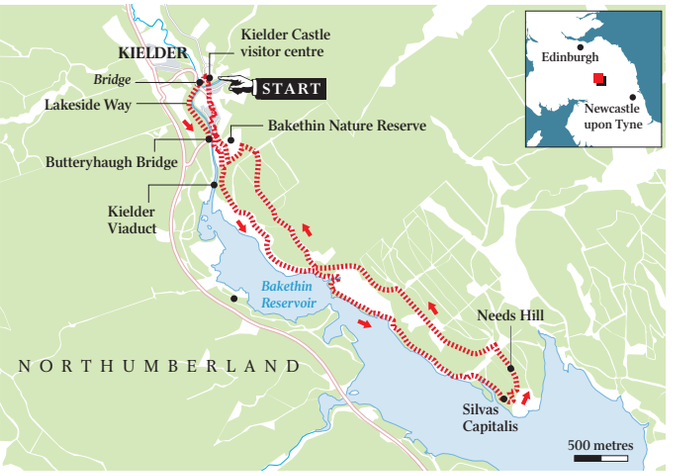


8 Bakethin Nature Reserve, Kielder, Northumberland

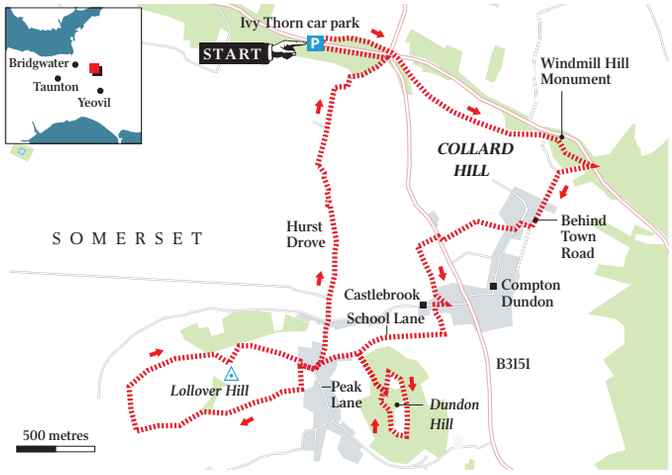
How hard is it? 6½ miles; moderate; lakeside and woodland trails

This walk traces tree-lined shores above Bakethin Nature Reserve. Spot red squirrels and common crossbills, newts and ospreys. Come face to face with *Silvas Capitalis* at the end of the walk, a sculpture made from 3,000 pieces of European larch.
Map OS Explorer OL42
Start Kielder Castle Visitor Centre and car park, NE48 1EP (NY631934)
Getting there Train to Hexham. Road: 30 miles from Hexham and 40 miles from Carlisle/M6, via Bellingham.
Walk Turn left onto road over bridge. Left then right onto Kielder Lakeside Way (KLW) through Viaduct Wood. Turn left on road, over Butteryhaugh Bridge, then right on KLW through Bakethin Nature Reserve, past weir and *Silvas Capitalis* sculpture onto peninsula. Follow KLW as it curves left, inland and over Needs Hill to junction with bridleway (BW) at NY658908. Turn left, leaving KLW and following BW through forest to path junction above Bakethin Reservoir (NY641916). Turn right onto FP then bear left on track through forest, turning left near top of hill to return to BW. Turn right back to road at Butteryhaugh Bridge to finish.
Lunch The Pheasant Inn, Stannersburn, NE48 1DD (01434 240382, thepheasantinn.com)
More information Visit Kielder (visitkielder.com)

A red squirrel



Woodlands, waterfalls and lochside paths



11 Collard Hill, Somerset

How hard is it? 7½ miles; moderate; footpaths and lanes

The Polden Hills are host to Britain's rarest butterfly, the large blue. Watch them flitting between wild thyme flowers on this walk over Polden Ridge, Collard Hill and Windmill Hill. Enjoy views to Glastonbury Tor from the Iron Age hillfort and Bronze Age barrow on Dundon Hill, its calcareous grassland fringed with ancient oak woods. Orchids thrive here in summer, including common twayblades, greater butterfly and pyramidal varieties. Bag the trig point on Lollover Hill before finishing across the Somerset Levels.

Map OS Explorer 141

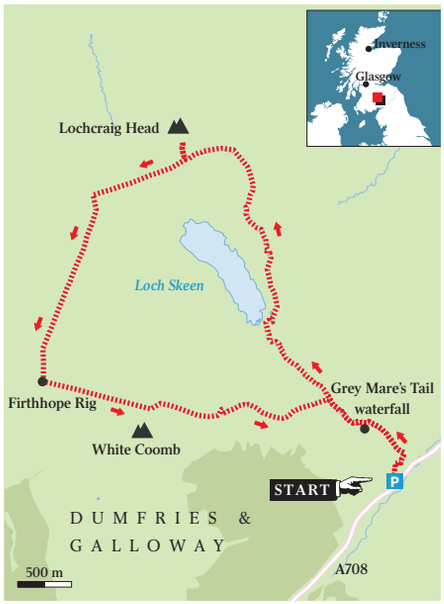
Start Ivy Thorn Hill car park (National Trust), BA16 0TZ (ST480345)

Getting there Trains to Bridgwater or Castle Cary, buses to Street. Road: just off B3151, south of A39 and Street.

Walk Head east along footpath (FP) parallel to road, cross B3151 and follow FP to Windmill Hill Monument. Descend, turn right onto bridleway to Behind Town Road. Turn left, first right, then left to signed FP on right. Follow FP across fields to B3151. Turn right, cross to FP across field to path junction. Turn left on FP to road in Castlebrook. Turn right, then left on FP. Cross field and turn right, following FP to end of School Lane. Turn left up Dundon Hill, return to School Lane, turn left to Peak Lane. Turn left on lane then right onto FP. Follow FP left to Lollover Hill, returning past trig point and back to Peak Lane. Turn left on Peak Lane, onto Hurst Drove and onto FP across fields to lane at Ivy Thorn Manor. Follow lane uphill, turn left at top to return to car park.

Lunch The Halfway House, Pitney Hill, TA10 9AB (thehalfwayhouse.co.uk)

More information Visit Somerset (visitsomerset.co.uk)



12 Loch Skeen, Dumfries and Galloway

How hard is it? 7 miles; challenging

Spot ospreys and peregrines on White Coomb, the highest of the Moffat Hills. Walk past the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall, which drops 60m from Loch Skeen. Turn around here or continue to the plateau at Lochcraig Head and White Coomb, with views to the Solway Firth.

Map OS Explorer 330

Start Grey Mare's Tail car park, DG10 9LH (NT186144)

Getting there Train to Dumfries and buses to Moffat but no buses along the A708. Road — A708 from Moffat (and M74) towards Selkirk.

Walk Follow obvious trail up valley, northeast of Tail Burn. Pass Grey Mare's Tail waterfall to Loch Skeen. Leave path and head up and right to line of old fence and wall. Bear left, following this uphill and left to Lochcraig Head, diverting right for summit. Continue along wall/fence through Talla Nick, over Firthybrig Head and Donald's Cleuch Head to Firthhope Rig. Turn left, following old wall/fence line up to White Coomb. Divert right to summit. Descend back to Loch Skeen, following wall west, steeply down Rough Craigs and over Upper Tarnberry before reaching Trail Burn. Cross carefully to reach Loch Skeen path, turning right to finish.

Lunch Brodies, Holm Street, Moffat, DG10 9EB (brodiesofmoffat.co.uk)

More information nts.org.uk

Loch Skeen in Dumfries and Galloway

13 Loch Garten, Highland

How hard is it? 7 miles; easy; fairly level forest and lochside trails

Walk through Loch Garten's wonderful Caledonian pinewoods, a fragrant mix of lichen-encrusted Scots pine, juniper, rowan, blaeberry, birch and heather, and home to rare capercaillie, Scottish crossbills and red squirrels. Trace the shores of Loch Garten, famous for its breeding ospreys, with views to the Cairngorms.

Map OS Explorer OL57

Start Boat of Garten, PH24 3BH (NH943189)

Getting there Train to Aviemore and heritage railway or bus to Boat of Garten. Road: off the A95 northeast of Aviemore.

Walk North on Spey Avenue, right over Garten Bridge to B970. Cross and follow red markers through forest to fork (NH956187). Bear right, leaving marked trail. After approx ½ mile take path left to northern shore of Loch Mallachie. Right at first junction, then sharp left to Loch Garten. Left, follow shore path to road. Turn right to RSPB visitor centre. Return along roadside path, crossing into woods after ½ mile. Use boardwalk over lochan and continue to track on left. Follow track through woodland to junction with outbound trail. Turn right to return.

Lunch Osprey Coffee House, Boat of Garten, PH24 3BN

More information RSPB Loch Garten (rspb.org.uk) or Cairngorms National Park (cairngorms.co.uk)

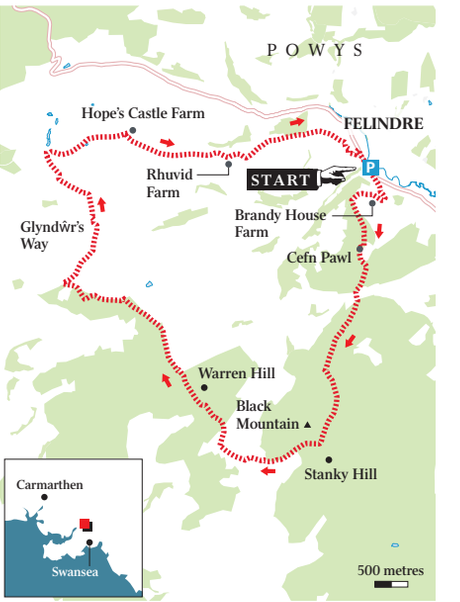
A Scottish crossbill

RICHARD CLARKSON/ALAMY

14 Mullion, Cornwall

How hard is it? 6½ miles; moderate; undulating coast paths

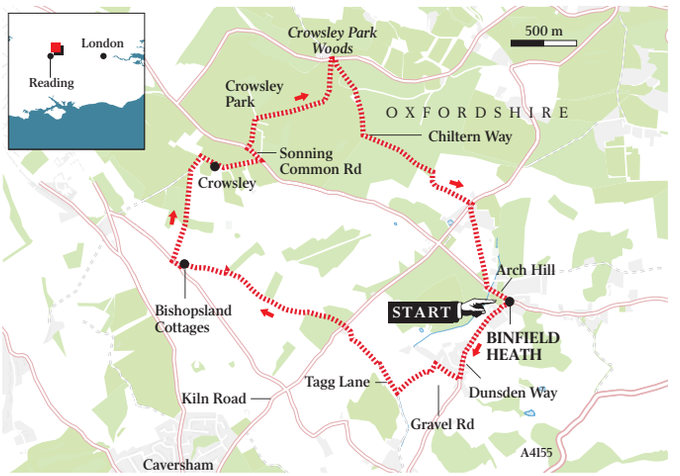
Lizard's mix of coastal and grassland habitats make it a top spot for rare wild flora as you trace the coast path over the headlands at Vellan and Predannack from peaceful Mullion Cove.
Map OS Explorer 103
Start Mullion Cove car park, TR12 7EX (SW671180)
Getting there Train to Redruth, 34 bus to Mullion. Road — A3083 from Helston towards Lizard; signs to Mullion Cove.
Walk Follow road downhill, left at Mullion Mill Farm and along lane to crossroads. Turn right onto footpath (FP), cross Lizard nature reserve to lane. Pass Predannack Manor Farm, take FP on left across fields then right on lane to Windy Ridge Farm. Turn left on FP heading southeast across Lower Predannack Downs to path junction after Kynance Farm (SW680145). Turn right down valley to South West Coast Path (SWCP). Turn right, follow SWCP around Predannack Head back to Mullion Cove. Follow road uphill back to Mullion.
Lunch Porthmellin Café, Mullion Cove, TR12 7ES (01326 240941)
More information Visit Cornwall (visitcornwall.com)



15 Glyndwr's Way, Powys

How hard is it? 12 miles; challenging

This is a gloriously peaceful walk, joining a stretch of Glyndwr's Way over Cefn Pawl, Black Mountain, Fron and Rhuvid Bank, with only Welsh mountain ponies for company. Felindre stands on the banks of the River Teme, a tributary of the Severn with Arthurian connections.
Map OS Explorer 214
Start Felindre village hall car park, LD7 1YN (SO169810)
Getting there Train to Knighton, bus to Felindre. Road: on the B4355 between Knighton and A483 to Newtown.
Walk Turn right out of car park then right signed Brandy House Farm and Glyndwr's Way (GW). Follow GW up Cefn Pawl, across road and over Black Mountain to path junction below Stanky Hill (SO161767). Turn right, leaving GW and following bridleway (BW) downhill to road. Cross, follow track to BW at Bwlch-gwyn House. Turn right onto BW over Warren Hill and along byway, then fence line to rejoin GW (SO121793). Turn right, follow GW through fields and copse to track then road. Turn right on lane towards Hope's Castle Farm, then right (on GW) just before farm. Continue on GW through Rhuvid Farm to road in Felindre. Turn left, then right for the village hall.
Lunch Take a picnic
More information Glyndwr's Way National Trail (nationaltrail.co.uk)



16 Crowsley Park Woods, Oxfordshire

How hard is it? 5½ miles; easy; footpaths and woodland trails

Explore the Chilterns chalk landscape, taking in ancient mixed woodland and grassland home to white admiral butterflies in Crowsley Park Woods.
Map OS Explorer 171
Start Binfield Heath village centre, RG9 4DU (SU746785)
Getting there Trains to Reading, regular bus to Binfield Heath. Road: just north of the A4155 Reading to Henley road.
Walk Follow Dunsden Way to chapel, turn right onto Gravel Road, then left onto footpath (FP) across fields. Turn right on Tagg Lane (track) to FP on right after sharp bend. Follow FP across fields, across Kiln Road, through Comp Wood to Bishopsland Cottages. Turn right on road, then right onto FP across fields and through Lady's Shaw Wood to join Chiltern Way (CW). Bear right through Crowsley to Sonning Common Road. Turn left on road then right, following CW around Crowsley Park and left to road opposite Old Place (SU732804). Turn sharp right, following CW signed Binfield Heath through Crowsley Park Woods and onto Bones Lane. Pass pub, cross Harpsden Road to Common Lane, bearing left onto Arch Hill to finish.
Lunch Orwells, Shiplake Row (orwellsrestaurant.com)
More information Experience Oxfordshire (experienceoxfordshire.org)

More walks next page

Secluded bays and mountain views

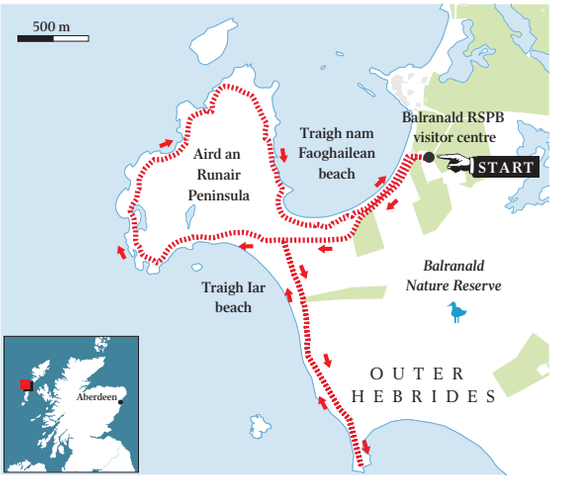
PEARL BUCKNALL/ALAMY

Traigh nam Faoghailean beach in North Uist, Outer Hebrides

17 Aird an Runair Peninsula, Western Isles

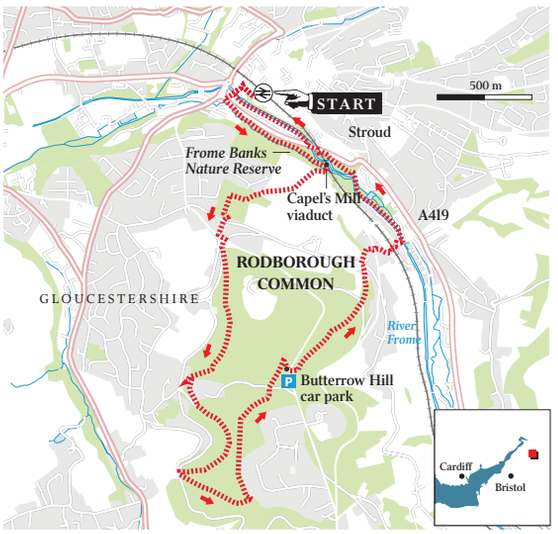
How hard is it? 5½ miles; moderate

The peninsula lies on the wild western shores of North Uist, a place of craggy foreshore and sandy beaches. This walk visits the Balranald Nature Reserve, a stronghold of the corncrake. Loop the peninsula before tracing the shoreline to the headland at Rubha Port Scolpaig.
Map OS Explorer 454
Start Balranald RSPB Visitor Centre, HS6 5DL (NF706707)
Getting there CalMac Ferries from Uig (Skye). Buses are on request, contact Grenitote Travel (01876 560244) on morning of travel. Road: on North Uist, follow A865 north from Clachan towards Sollas, then follow signs.
Walk Follow waymarkers west along track to Traigh Iar beach. Turn left, walking along track or beach to headland. Return along beach or track to waymarkers and turn left, following coastal path around peninsula and onto Traigh nam Faoghailean beach. Cross this and bear right at waymarker back to outbound track, turn left to return to visitor centre.
Lunch The Wee Cottage Kitchen, Malaclete, North Uist, HS6 5BX
More information rspb.org.uk

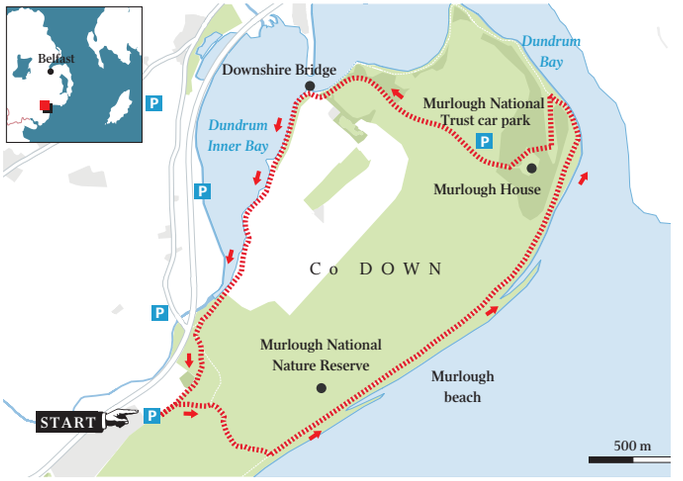


18 Rodborough Common, Gloucestershire

How hard is it? 4½ miles; moderate; one big hill



More than 30 species of butterfly wing their way around Rodborough Common. Enjoy views over the Severn Estuary.
Map OS Explorer 168
Start Stroud railway station, GL5 3AP (SO849051)
Getting there Stroud railway station. Road: on A419 between M5 and Cirencester.
Walk Exit onto Cheapside, turn left at roundabout, cross over canal and under Dr Newton's Way. Turn left on footpath (FP) through Frome Banks Nature Reserve to Capel's Mill viaduct. Cross footbridge and follow FP to Butterrow West Road. Cross, follow path between houses to road and cross onto common. Follow trail left along western edge. At SO849029 turn left on trail behind houses, heading north across common. Bear right to cross road near Butterrow Hill car park. Descend left across Butterrow Hill to road at Mt Vernon gate. Follow path downhill, across Rodborough Lane and right, cross Butterrow Hill road and on to railway. Cross and turn right on road across canal. Turn left onto canal path, right on towpath and walk back into Stroud.
Lunch Stroud Brewery and Taproom, GL5 2BY (stroudbrewery.com)
More information nationaltrust.org.uk



19 Murlough National Nature Reserve, Co Down

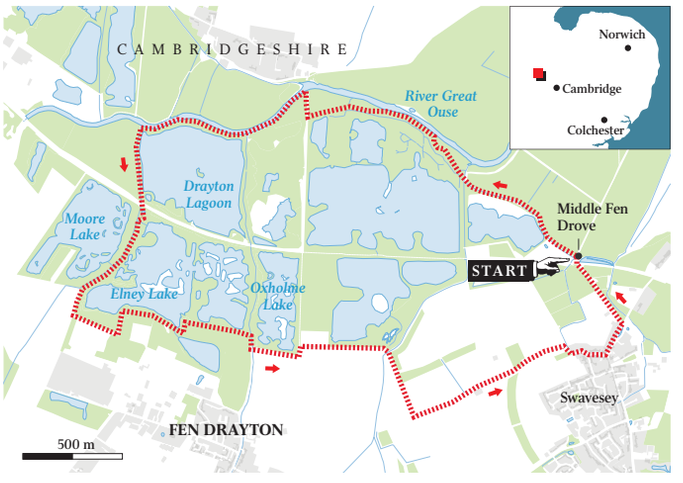
How hard is it? 4½ miles; moderate; flat, beach or dune trails

Follow boardwalks to Murlough beach for views to Slieve Donard, the highest of the Mourne Mountains.
Map OSNI Mournes Activity Map
Start Murlough National Trust car park, BT33 0NQ (J394338)
Getting there Belfast stations are closest. Ulsterbus 20 from Belfast to Newcastle, alight at Twelve Arches to join route. Road: off A2 between Clough and Newcastle.
Walk Enter nature reserve through gate at back of car park, join boardwalk and turn left. Follow boardwalk to beach. Turn left onto beach for two miles into Dundrum Bay. Leave beach, walking through gap in trees to steps on right. Climb steps then follow path up through woodland. Pass right of Murlough House to access road. Follow road across Murlough estate to Dundrum Inner Bay, then left to gravel track before Downshire Bridge. Turn left onto track and follow it along edge of bay. Stay right, close to shore until boardwalk near A2. Don't cross A2, follow boardwalk left back to finish.
Lunch Barrel and Bean on Murlough Beach
More information nationaltrust.org.uk

20 Fen Drayton, Cambridgeshire

How hard is it? 6 miles; easy; level waterside paths

Fen Drayton hosts an abundance of wildlife beneath big skies.
Map OS Explorer 225
Start Middle Fen Drove, Swavesey, CB24 4QJ (TL362691)
Getting there Train to Cambridge, bus to Swavesey. Road: north of the A14 and A1307, between Cambridge and Huntingdon.
Walk Follow Middle Fen Drove over busway and waterway, turning left on bridleway (BW). Cross footbridge and continue on footpath (FP) to Holywell Ferry Road. Turn right, then left on BW between River Great Ouse and Drayton Lagoon. Take BW left along edge of lagoon and over busway. Follow FP opposite between Elney Lake and Moore Lake, around Elney Lake to BW and Oxholme Lake. Turn right on BW then left around southern end of Oxholme Lake. Turn right on BW over bridge then left on FP past windmill. Continue on Mill Way to Taylor's Lane, turn right to reach High Street, then left to finish.
Lunch Carriages of Cambridge, Fen Drayton, CB24 4SD (carriagesofcambridge.co.uk)
More information visitsouthcambs.co.uk



I'm an expert on exam stress — here's how to handle results day

A-level grades come out this week. Parents need to be calm and ready, says Katharine Radice

JOONEY WOODWARD FOR THE TIMES

Katharine Radice

As an education consultant, I've been supporting teenagers and their families through results day for years. I thought I was used to the annual dose of nervous tension while everyone waits for their grades. This year, though, the emotional temperature feels different. My sons, in year 13 and year 11, are waiting for A-level and GCSE results. At home there's an uneasy backdrop of uncertainty: will it all be OK? What happens next if it's not?

I work with top schools nationally and internationally, independent and state, running workshops for parents. Parenting teenagers is a tough gig — adults often share their frustrations with me, describing how easily conversations spiral into rejection or arguments. "Whatever I say seems to make my teen angry," one parent told me recently. "They keep telling me I don't understand. They just want me to back off and leave them alone."

Results day brings all this to a head, especially when a teenager is waiting for their A-level grades. For year 13 students the grades arrive with a set of time-capped decisions. Accept or reject a university offer? Ask for a re-mark? Go through clearing? Each of these decisions has its own process and timeline. There are different deadlines, websites, different points of contact for re-marks, university or careers advice. It can be a lot to take in. Results can feel life-defining for a teenager because they will affect how they spend the next few years.

As parents we will need to help our teens navigate this when they're deep in the melting pot of results day emotions. I've been chatting to my son Hugo about what's likely to help and what isn't. Here are my strategies to keep conversations constructive and make the best of whatever A-level grades land on Thursday.

Remind them grades aren't everything

A sixth-former once told me: "It really helps when parents see us as more than our exam grades." It's worth remembering. Results can feel definitive, and they often get more airtime in conversations than attributes that aren't graded as visibly. In the run-up to next week I've been reminding my sons that their exam results are only one part of what they carry forward, describing the qualities I value in them, such as their good humour and kindness. I encourage parents to do this so that there's a clear perspective on what *isn't* at stake on Thursday: attributes such as resilience, integrity, cheerfulness and steadiness. Qualities like these aren't dependent on the grade they achieve for A-level maths.

Talk through all the possible outcomes before the day

It's always helpful to talk through possible outcomes in advance and consider what a plan B might look like. Calmly discussing what to do if grades aren't as expected gives teenagers a sense of agency and stops the day feeling like a cliff edge. It means they'll feel better prepared all round for whatever eventuality awaits. Role-modelling a flexible outlook helps teens to stay motivated; if they're too focused on one outcome there's a risk they feel their effort was wasted if this doesn't work out. If a teenager believes their efforts were pointless, motivation can take a hit. If you seem prepared and happy to pivot they will be more ready to do so too.

Don't pretend plan B is as good as plan A

If your child was really invested in an outcome they're not going to appreciate it in the short term if you start claiming it's all much of a muchness or dismiss their sense of disappointment immediately, so do give them space for these emotions. But it is important as a parent to be upbeat about the upsides of plan B. While they are getting their head around new plans and a pivot in expectations, it will help if you are positive about the opportunities ahead. Help them to see that even if one door has shut, a new one has opened full of new possibilities and potential.

Familiarise yourself with the Ucas website so you are ready for the unexpected

Your teenager may have told you that they don't want your advice, but that doesn't mean they won't need your practical help if their grades are surprising. You can prepare by reading the guidance from your child's school about results day with key contacts and options for script reviews or re-marks. It's worth familiarising yourself with the advice on the Ucas website too.

In the heat of emotions on the day it can be hard for teenagers to get their heads around timelines, contact details and options. If they're faced with more decisions than they were expecting, it really helps if you are calm and clear about the practicalities of what they will need to do.

> "Discussing what to do if grades aren't as expected gives teens a sense of agency and stops the day feeling like a cliff edge

Remember, they're not your results

As a parent your instinctive reaction to a set of grades is likely to be coloured by how you'd have felt if you had received those grades yourself. That doesn't mean your teenager will — or should — feel the same way. Try to hold back, let your child's response be the first response and keep your focus on how you can offer practical, positive support for their next steps.

Allow them to express their emotions before getting on to solutions

Most teenagers find it difficult to open up about their feelings, especially if there's any flavour of a fear they've not done well enough. If a teenager feels that their grades could or should have been better there's a high chance they'll be feeling regret, anger or shame about decisions they made along the way. Don't underestimate the intensity of these emotions. If a teenager is surprised or disappointed by their grades, allow time for these feelings to surface before you get into the practical details of next-step decisions. They may need time on their own or with their friends before they're ready to talk things through with you. Ask them if there's anything they need you to understand about how they're feeling or the support they need. It'll be much easier for a teen to think constructively about next steps if they've had a chance to process their emotions first.

Try to avoid saying 'I told you so'

If you think that your child hasn't worked hard enough it's tempting to use grades as evidence that you were right all along. I'd encourage you to avoid adding blame to the conversations, because it will fuel the emotions that make it harder for a teen to think constructively about what to do next. Let the feelings settle, then frame the conversation by facing forwards. "Let's think about approaches for the next stage" usually works much better than "You should have listened to me the last time".

Treat each sibling as an individual

If you have more than one child you'll know that teenagers often anchor self-esteem around comparisons with their siblings. Differences between one child's grades and a brother or sister's previous/present/future grades may generate painful emotions such as jealousy, self-doubt or resentment. Take time to focus on each sibling individually, showing it is them you care about at this moment. Emphasise that grades measure skill in one particular subject, not how loved or valued a person is overall. This will reduce the risk that a child feels isolated, conflicted or overshadowed by their sibling.

Katharine Radice is the author of *The Parent's Guide to Exam Stress* (Bloomsbury, £16.99)

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Why is he so keen on sex in the shower?

Dr Suzi Godson
Sex counsel

Q My new-ish partner is very keen on sex in the shower. I went along with it at first because it turns him on so much, but while it looks good in the movies I find it wildly overrated, not to mention awkward and uncomfortable. I don't want to kill the mood, but next time he suggests it how honest should I be?

A Soapy suds slathered across wet skin. Flesh pressed against flesh pressed against glass. The shower is and always has been cinematic shorthand for steamy sex, and as a result is something every sexually curious person has tried. The trouble is, the camera lies.

For a start, for it to be comfortable you need a lot of silicone-based lubricant. Experienced couples keep industrial quantities of Sliquid next to the shampoo, but for most, shower sex is a "spontaneous decision" and so they approach it unprepared.

It tends to happen when relationships are relatively new and couples are learning about each other by working their way through the sexual curriculum. They'll do all the positions and all the places and at some stage they inevitably end up in the shower. In the cramped space of your typical one-metre glass cubicle there isn't much room for manoeuvre, and it's not particularly warm. The average UK shower head has a fall of about 30cm, so one person gets the full force of the warm water while the other shivers, getting only the occasional splash. Still, the optics are great so you press on.

As you attempt intercourse you realise that the soapy water has washed away all your natural lubrication. It is at this point that you learn that shower sex feels like being internally sandpapered. Because you don't want to wimp out — after all, shower sex is brilliant, isn't it? — you bite your tongue, but you rapidly realise you are more likely to tear your vaginal wall than have an orgasm.

Shower sex is, as you say, overrated, awkward and uncomfortable, but many women don't confront that elephant in the wet room directly. Instead they find ways to avoid having sex in the shower. I don't believe that is the right strategy, because it allows the myth that shower sex is amazing to perpetuate, so if I were you I would be honest. If he remains keen despite your objections, insist he stocks up on lubricant — obviously if that doesn't help, it's a no.

The alternative if you are looking for a change of scene from the bedroom is to steer him away from the bathroom and into the kitchen, which has just as much sexual potential. Food and sex are and always have been deeply intertwined. Taste, smell, touch and sight play roles in the enjoyment of food and physical intimacy, and aphrodisiac foods such as oysters, sashimi, strawberries, champagne and chocolate have ancient associations with sexual arousal and intimacy.

> "Shower sex is awkward and uncomfortable but many don't confront that elephant in the wet room

Aphrodisiac foods can be shared, squished and licked off skin, and sex is the sweetest dessert. Food sex is much more creative and far more enjoyable, although you may need a shower afterwards.

Send your questions to weekendsex@thetimes.com

Men's health

Train with Harry Jameson

My 25-minute 'bare minimum' workout

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thetimes.com/mensfitness

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Doughnuts in 30 minutes? Here's how I cheat at baking

Even the best bakers like Delia Smith and Mary Berry take shortcuts. Sarah Rainey shares the experts' secrets

As a mum of two boys juggling family life, a job and a to-do list longer than my arm, I love a hack. Give me workarounds that will make my life easier, my laundry load lighter, my food shop faster and my stress levels lower and I'm all in.

I also love to bake. I've had a sweet tooth since I was little and my sons, four and six, are always first to the table when it comes to mixing something delicious in a bowl. We make oaty flapjacks for post-school snacks, DIY pizzas for weekday dinners and whenever their birthdays come around, they're full of ideas for the cakes of their dreams. To date, these have included a chocolate construction mountain, a Spider-Man sponge and a dubious blue creation inspired by Elsa from *Frozen*.

But like anyone trying to get by in this busy world, I don't have time to do it all. These days I'm all about recipes that make life easier. I'm immediately turned off by endless ingredients lists, complex instructions and long waiting times. I've tried just about every baking hack under the sun — and I've become a proud, unashamed cheat.

Over the years I've learnt how to transform dull, shop-bought cakes into spectacular desserts, make ice cream from a tin of custard and turn a packet of shop-bought biscuits into mouthwatering sponge. I've also taught myself to whip up a batch of hot, sugary doughnuts from a loaf of stale bread, bake squidgy red velvet cookies from a box of cake mix and make drool-worthy cinnamon buns from ready-made pizza dough.

Please don't feel bad about faking your way to baking glory. There's something about the word "cheat" that makes it sound like you're doing something sneaky, like serving up a takeaway at a dinner party and pretending you've made it all yourself (guilty). But we need to reclaim the word — and do so with pride. Some of the greatest bakers of our time have admitted to taking the odd shortcut now and again. Mary Berry, for example, uses shop-bought pastry, while Delia Smith, author of the original cheat's cookbook, uses a range of supermarket staples, from tart cases to caramel sauce. And social media is full of viral cheat codes for success in the kitchen, even though some are undeniably wackier than others.

> "Don't feel bad about faking your way to baking glory — you're in good company

Sarah Rainey

Rest assured, I've tried them all and I've used some of these for inspiration in my foolproof recipes that are guaranteed to delight. So count yourself in good company if you too like to cheat. Let's embrace the easy option together. The way I see it, baking should be fun, fast and for everyone, no matter your age, experience or the contents of your cupboards. If what comes out of your kitchen brings a little sweet joy to your — or someone else's — life, it's absolutely the right thing to do.

Pink fudge blondies

Pretty and pink, this bake is about as girlie as things get in our house, where most days are about superheroes and monster trucks. But we all have a soft spot for the little iced ring biscuits that come out for every birthday party, and this is inspired by them. It's no-bake, so you don't have to switch the oven on — and you can make it several days ahead.

Makes 20

Ingredients

- 150g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
- 400g iced ring biscuits, with 10 more for decorating
- 400g white chocolate, chopped
- 397g condensed milk

Method

1 Grease and line a 20cm square baking tin with tin foil or greaseproof paper.

2 In a large bowl or ziplock bag, crush the biscuits (holding back the extra 10 for the topping) to crumbs by bashing them with a rolling pin. You can also do this by blitzing them in a blender or food processor.

3 Melt the butter, either in the microwave on high (do this in 30-second blasts so it doesn't get too hot and spit everywhere) or in a small saucepan, stirring continuously so it doesn't burn. Pour the melted butter over the crushed biscuits and stir together.

4 Transfer the mixture to the tin and press it down firmly and evenly. Put the tin in the fridge for an hour so the base can set.

5 Meanwhile, melt the white chocolate in a heatproof bowl. I like doing this in the microwave on high in 30-second blasts, stirring between each, but you can also do it by suspending the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water (making sure the bowl doesn't touch the water) and stirring occasionally.

6 Once almost completely melted, pour in the condensed milk and stir to combine. Working quickly now, as the mixture will start to thicken and set, add the food colouring and beat it in. You're aiming for a nice pale pink (to match the biscuits), so don't get too heavy-handed with the food colouring and don't worry about mixing too thoroughly, as a swirl of colour looks so nice.

7 Pour the pink mixture over the biscuit base. Press the remaining biscuits — whole or crumbled, it's entirely up to you — into the topping.

8 Put the tin in the fridge for at least 2 hours to set. Use a sharp knife to cut it into pieces (it's super-sweet, so you don't want them too big). The blondies will keep for 4-5 days in an airtight container at room temperature.

Red velvet cookies

It's hard to beat a cookie, warm and chewy, just out of the oven — and these are mouthwateringly good. Made with a box of red velvet cake mix (one of my favourite cheats), they're ideal for baking with kids when you don't want lots of ingredients on the go. Experiment with whatever flavour of cake mix you have in the cupboard and stir in nuts, chocolate chips, marshmallows or rainbow sweets.

Baker's hack Shop-bought cake mix is a really versatile ingredient as it contains most baking basics in one handy packet — and you can use it for lots more than just cakes. Add milk rather than butter/oil to make pancakes, use half milk and half butter/oil and stir in some chocolate chips to make brownies, or try adding a teaspoon of baking powder and a handful of oats, then baking it in paper cases to make muffins.

Makes 8

Ingredients

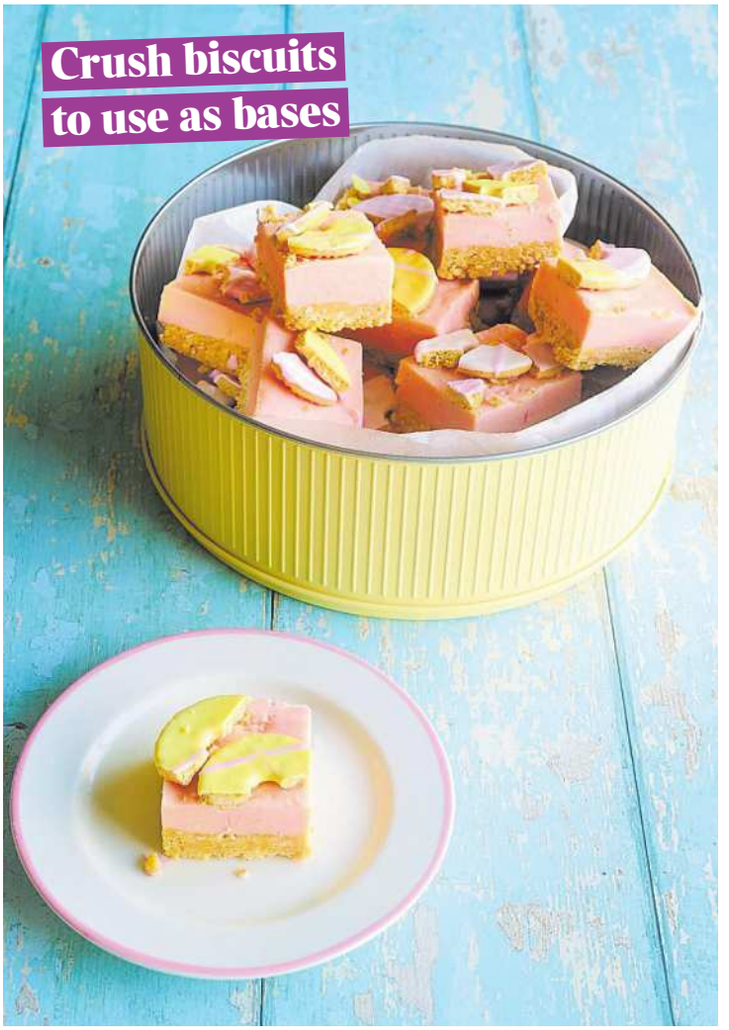
- 425g box of red velvet cake mix
- 100g unsalted butter
- 2 eggs
- 140g white chocolate chips, or any other mix-ins of your choice

Method

1 Tip the cake mix into a large bowl and stir to get rid of any lumps. Put the butter in a heatproof bowl and melt it in the microwave on high for around a minute until liquid. You could also do this in a small saucepan.

2 Mix the melted butter into the cake mix, crack in the eggs and stir well. Fold in the chocolate chips, holding back a small handful to add to the tops of your cookies. Put the mixture in the fridge for 30 min to firm up.

3 Preheat the oven to 160C fan/gas 4 and line 2 baking sheets with greaseproof paper.



WILLIAM SHAW; NATALIE MARTINEZ FOR THE TIMES

Make cookies with cake mix

4 Divide and roll the mixture into 8 balls, about the size of small plums. Space them well apart on the lined baking sheets and press in the remaining chocolate chips. Bake for 10-12 min until they're just holding together. Don't be tempted to overbake; they will harden as they cool and you can leave them on the baking sheets until cool enough to handle.
5 Enjoy hot, cold or however you like. They will keep for 3-4 days in an airtight container.

Sprinkle doughnuts

This is one of those recipes you really have to make to believe, because what you start off with is so very different from the tasty result! My sons love smooshing up the bread and I find little hands are very helpful for moulding the shapes. I use a brioche loaf to make mine, but you could also use ordinary white bread, rolls or brioche burger buns.
Baker's hack Jazz these up with whatever toppings you fancy: try melted dark chocolate and chopped pistachios, melted white chocolate and freeze-dried berries, or a creation of your own.

Makes 10

Ingredients

For the doughnuts

10 slices of brioche or white bread
Small bowl of lukewarm water
500ml vegetable oil, for frying

For the topping/decoration

2 tbsp caster sugar
100g icing sugar
½ pot of multicoloured sprinkles

Method

1 Using a sharp knife, slice the crusts off the bread. Keep these to make breadcrumbs, use in a bread-and-butter pudding or feed the birds.
2 Dip your fingers into the lukewarm water and, using wet hands, crumple the first slice of bread up into a ball. Adding more water as needed but not so much as to make it sticky, form a smooth, rounded patty. Flatten it slightly with your palm. Press your thumb (or use a straw/end of a spoon) through the centre to make a ring doughnut shape. Repeat for the remaining slices of bread.
3 Decant the oil into a large, high-sided saucepan and carefully heat it up. Make sure little helpers are kept well away from this part and turn the handle of the saucepan inwards so it's not sticking out over the hob. Test the temperature of the oil by dropping a crust into it. If it sizzles and floats on contact, it's ready. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the doughnuts to the oil. You can do this in batches if it's easier. Fry them for 2-3 min on each side before carefully flipping them over.
4 Once golden brown all over, use a slotted spoon to remove them to a plate covered in kitchen roll. This will soak up any excess oil.
5 Put the caster sugar in a small bowl and, while still hot, roll the doughnuts in the sugar so they're evenly coated. Leave them on a wire rack to cool.
6 Put the icing sugar in one bowl and the sprinkles in another. Add a few teaspoons of cold water to the icing sugar and mix well — you want it to be smooth but reasonably thick so it doesn't run off the side of the doughnuts.
7 Dunk the top of the cooled doughnuts into the icing, followed by the sprinkles, and place them on a board to set. They will keep for 2-3 days in an airtight container.

The best canned cocktails

Jane MacQuitty

Supermarket shelves may be stacked with fluorescent-hued horrors such as BuzzBallz and nauseatingly sweet premixed cocktails, but take heart. We bought three times as many ready-to-drink cocktails last year compared with 2020, which means the market for premium cans — made with the best full-strength spirits and good, fresh ingredients — is motoring.

Moth, the mix of total happiness, has added two cocktails (Mango Margarita and Strawberry Daiquiri) to its dozen-strong range, while heroic Whitebox, specialising in single-serve full-strength and classic cocktails, has a baker's dozen with three new delicious and limited-edition wallops made with the innovative Islay whisky distillery Bruichladdich. Forget wishy-washy Hugo spritz or retro piña colada being the drink of the summer — Bruichladdich's Penicillin, made with its dreamy, heavily peated Port Charlotte Islay whisky, gets my summer drink of 2026 vote and is the best cocktail in a can yet.

The craze for canned cocktails grew out of all that stirring and shaking we did instead of socialising during Covid, and the habit has stayed with us. Cash-strapped drinkers worked out early on that buying a host of costly ingredients to create popular mixes was prohibitively expensive and premixed cans were a much cheaper way of swigging a favourite fix, and a lot less faff than making your own.

> “Premixed cans are much cheaper and a lot less faff than making your own

If gin's your thing, check out Marks & Spencer's retro best buy. Or plump for its Tequila Spritz Sparkling Cocktail (6 per cent, 250ml can, £2.50), with zesty pink grapefruit and an earthy tequila note. MOTH's Paloma (10 per cent, 200ml, Tesco, £3.50) is a zippy charmer with masses of grapefruit zest and a peppery tequila nip.

At Asda, the Absolut Drinks Sparkling Raspberry Lemonade (5 per cent, 250ml, Asda, £2.17), made with Absolut Vodka, is drier than most canned cocktails and smells and tastes of fresh raspberries.

Interestingly, sales of whisky-based canned cocktails are rocketing, and if Penicillin sounds too punchy try Whitebox and Bruichladdich's Whisky Sour (19 per cent, 4 x 100ml cans, ukbruichladdich.com, £20), bursting with gloriously soft, smoky Islay whisky and bright with citrus zing.

Penicillin by Port Charlotte
22.5 per cent, 4 x 100ml cans, uk.bruichladdich.com, £20
Honey, smoke, lemon and ginger-licked, peat-reeky Islay malt whisky gem.

St Michael Limited Edition 40 Years Gin & Tonic
8 per cent, 250ml can, Marks & Spencer, £2.50
Just what you'd expect: a bright, clean, refreshing, drier G&T with lots of lemon zest and juniper.

Moth Mojito
10 per cent, 200ml can, Sainsbury's and Tesco, £4 or 4 for the price of 3
Punchy, cloudy, white Caribbean rum combo of mint, sweet juicy lime and a whoosh of soda water.

Non-Alcoholic Spicy Margarita
0 per cent, 250ml can, Waitrose, £1.80
Surprisingly tasty and authentic, vegan, ripe, zesty lime and black pepper twist for a zero.

Tequila Spritz Sparkling Cocktail
6 per cent, 250ml can, Marks & Spencer, £2.50
Tequila sales are motoring so forget yesteryear's neon Aperol spritzes and dive into this peppery, citrus hit.

Moth Paloma
10 per cent, 200ml can, Tesco, £4 or 4 for the price of 3
If you want a stronger tequila fix, buy this can — a juicy, grapefruit gem with an authentic earthy spin.

Absolut Drinks Sparkling Raspberry Lemonade
5 per cent, 250ml can, Asda, £2.17
Cheaper at Asda than elsewhere and of all the raspberry combos, this vodka-laced edition was easily the best.

Bruichladdich's Whisky Sour
19 per cent, 4 x 100ml cans, ukbruichladdich.com, £20
Terrific Islay single malt whisky-based sour, softer than its Penicillin sister, with lots of lemon juice.

Outside

Use miscanthus grasses to liven up your garden

Miscanthus sinensis 'Yakushima Dwarf', centre

These versatile plants add flowing movement to a space, says Joe Swift, and can cope really well in a drought

It's that time of year when grasses come into their own, adding flowing naturalism and lovely movement, especially in a light breeze. They also make the perfect foil for flowering perennials like verbenas, agastaches and the daisies I wrote about last week (echinacea, heleniums, rudbeckias).

Many grasses will cope well with the drought conditions we've been experiencing. Some, like purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea* 'Transparent'), are particularly ephemeral and airy, while others, like Korean feather reed grass *(Calamagrostis brachytricha*), send up plumes of flowers. Miscanthus grasses, which are commonly known as elephant grass or feather reed grass, are generally more solid, forming a sturdy silhouette with their strappy leaves.

Miscanthus grasses are coming into flower about now, triggered by the summer heat. In cooler areas they may not reliably flower, although with the summer we've had I expect quite a show across the board this year. Their flowers are fabulous: large, silky, tassel-like panicles in a range of purples, coppery bronzes and silvery pinks, which turn into fluffy cloud-like seed heads in whites, light beiges and oaty blonds. From flower right through to seed-head, their interest lasts for many months, making them an essential — and a secret weapon — in most of the gardens I design.

The larger miscanthus make excellent statement plants, whether holding a border, softening the corner of a house or using as a backdrop. The medium-sized and smaller ones are versatile and can be grown as a large clump or dotted through a border. As with many grasses, they help to effortlessly glue a scheme together while loosening it up at the same time.

In my own garden I started off with a few, dividing and dotting them around for their height. They can also make an excellent loose hedge, though perhaps best planted in a sinuous curve rather than in a straight line. Not being evergreen, it will be a summer, autumn and winter hedge but a low-maintenance one. Just chop back once a year and that's it.

Planting

Unfortunately now is not the time to be planting anything, really. Ideally grasses should go into the ground in early spring. But if you see a lovely one and just can't leave it behind, don't let it dry out. Miscanthus generally like a sunny spot in well-drained (or even poor) soil. They cope well with strong wind but they dislike compaction and winter waterlogging, so dig over the soil well at the bottom of the planting hole to give the plant an easy root

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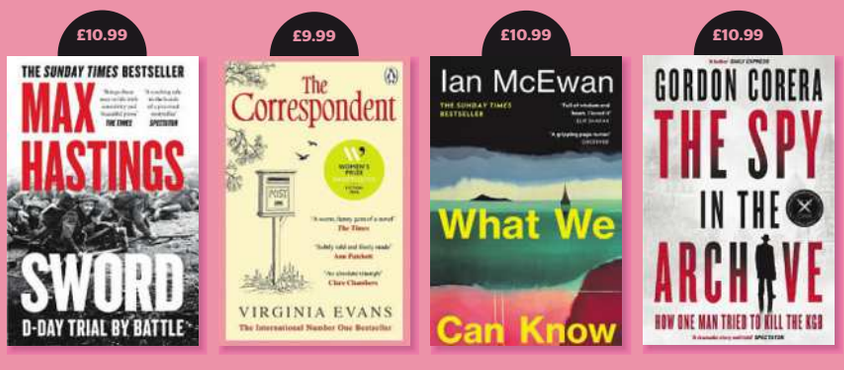

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ELKE BORKOWSKI/GAP PHOTOS; ALAMY

run and good drainage. Most soils don't require any compost added. Mulch around the plants with organic matter to suppress weeds and retain a little moisture.

Maintaining

Miscanthus grasses are extremely low-maintenance. Never cut them back in the autumn as you'll miss out on one of their greatest qualities: adding form and interest to the winter garden, especially good when backlit by a low winter sun. Cut them back hard, down to about 5-10cm from the ground in early spring (in about March). If you cut back too late you may be cutting into some of the new growth. I use hedge trimmers and do it as part of the general spring cutback, along with other grasses and perennials that are still standing. Don't overfeed grasses either, as this encourages leaf growth and no flowers. I don't ever feed mine; it keeps them growing upright and stops them flopping over.

Dividing

Lift and divide when a plant gets too big for its allotted space, becomes out of balance with the rest or if you want to divide it up to make new plants for free. Lift an entire clump (a well-established miscanthus may take some digging) then split using back-to-back forks and prise apart with an old saw or serrated kitchen knife. Discard the weak, non-productive roots and trim back to a healthy firm clump for replanting.

> "Their flowers are fabulous: silky, tassel-like panicles in a range of purples, bronzes and silvery pinks

Great spots to see a wide range of grasses

- Knoll gardens (Wimborne, Dorset)
- Bressingham gardens (Diss, Norfolk)
- Beth Chatto Gardens (near Colchester, Essex)
- Trentham Estate (Staffordshire)
- Scampston Walled Garden (North Yorkshire)
- Ashwood Nurseries (Kingswinford, West Midlands)

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'Life is simply too short to be that can-do gardener who waters everything'

Ann Treneman reveals her warm-weather tactics

Joe's favourite miscanthus

Miscanthus sinensis 'Adagio'

Upright with narrow silver leaves that turn a golden yellow in autumn. Pink-tinged tassel-like flowers turn into creamy white plumes as they mature and then an oaty yellow into winter. Height from 1-1.5m.

Elephant grass (*M. x giganteus*)

The biggest, it's grown as biofuel but if you have the space it can make a fabulous statement grass. Vigorous, with upright stems bearing stiff, linear, mid-green leaves and panicles of silky, pink flowers turning silver with age. Height from 2.5-4m.

Silver Castle (*M. sinensis* 'Malepartus')

Has wider arching leaves with a white stripe down the centre. Height from 1.5-2.5m.

M. sinensis 'Kaskade'

Narrow, arching leaves with prominent white midribs, turning rich bronze in autumn, and feathery rosy-pink flower heads in late summer that are held well above the foliage. Height from 1.5-2.5m.

M. sinensis 'Morning light'

This one has an airy feel about it. Slender green leaves with narrow cream edges and reddish-brown flowers. Height from 1-1.5m.

M. 'Ferner Osten'

Forms mounds of slender green foliage and has stunning dark purple red flower plumes. Height from 1-1.5m.

M. 'Kleine Silberspinne'

Lovely plumes that fade to silver. Height from 1-1.5m.

M. 'Graziella'

Fast becoming my favourite. Tidy mound of foliage and maintains a nice upright vase shape when in flower. Rose-tinted silky plumes that turn to ghostlike white seed heads for winter. Height from 1.5-2.5m.

M. sinensis 'Yakushima Dwarf'

Want a smaller one or to grow in a container? Then this is the one for you, with its lovely rounded mound of arching, slender foliage and pinkish flowerheads in late summer. Height 0.5-1m.

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How to avoid garden armageddon

Don't give up on your plot yet, says Ann Treneman

It seems that the dreaded perennial (in every way) issue that is the August gap is no longer content to occupy just one month. My own garden's August gap began in mid-July, when I returned after a weekend away to a brown border. The colour brown may indeed be having a fashion moment but brown dirt, leaves, stems, flowers and seedheads look very Seventies — and not in a good way.

The usual "mind the gap" issues have been intensified for most of us by the heat, the drought and the recent hosepipe ban. Down here in Kent, the water company urged us at the end of June to avoid using the garden hose and the ban began officially on July 3. I can talk of little else. Chats with garden friends have taken on an urgency as we discuss watering strategies and how to combat the gap when it seems as if just about everything is against us.

This is why the August gap is now a full-blown garden-geddon for many. The usual remedies — bedding plants, desperately bought rudbeckias, zingy new container planting, cutting back tired perennials — do not work when it's so hot and dry. Plants are stressed enough without having to deal with being pruned, fertilised, planted or mown. (Though read on and you'll see that I did break this rule.) Even weeding feels wrong when there is so much dirt on show.

"Everyone's garden looks awful now," a friend said. This isn't quite true but nonetheless new, inventive tactics are required to make a midsummer garden look good this year. My old plan before heatwaves started stacking up like wedding cake layers was to pre-empt the lull by sowing lots of annuals, mixing in herbs and some veg in the border and embracing grasses. But I failed to deadhead for most of June and even my zingy tall mallows developed classic heat stress signs of crinkled leaves, tiny flowers, brown stalks.

WIERT NIEUMAN/ALAMY

Fennel flourishes in warmer conditions

> "New tactics are required to make a mid-summer garden look good

We all have two major decisions to make: how to water and what to water. Life is simply too short to be that can-do gardener who waters everything. Besides, such largesse feels wrong with water in such demand. To help with that, I have deployed the old "bucket in the shower" trick and have enlisted the water in my clothes dryer's condenser drawer.

Then the question of what to water. First, let's celebrate those plants that don't seem to need watering at all. My sun-lovers include wisteria (having another month-long purple party), lavender, fennel (never seen it so tall), grasses and cornflowers (once I deadheaded them). I have taken too many cheap flights recently so it felt natural to categorise my plant watering in airline terms: first class, economy plus and economy. First-class plants get watered several times a week, economy-plus plants get moved into the shade, if possible, and watered once a week (if that), and those in economy are left to fend for themselves.

There are brutal choices to be made and it helps, before you do this, to have a serious tidy-up. Then take a fresh look at what you have. Most of us will have at least a few containers that we keep out of habit and not because the planting gives us any joy. In my case three large containers planted up six years ago to brighten up the courtyard now looked very tired indeed. They are now history. I'm just ignoring the green (now brown) roof and if I had a lawn, it would be as brown as all my neighbours'.

First class is occupied by the three trees (it's a roomy place) that I planted last autumn, plus the veg and fruit. I have also broken my own rule about not planting in a drought — I just couldn't stand the bare dirt — and have bought some gap-fillers including the perennials *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost' and 'Miner's Merlot' plus a few *Salvia* 'Feathers Peacock'. They are all tough but, as they are new, need regular watering. Some border gaps have been filled by moving containers into the border. The roses are in economy plus (they don't seem to mind), as are the hostas and other shade-lovers. The rest are in economy — that's just the way it has to be.

I do love my morning perambulation around the garden, coffee cup in hand, noting the small changes that give us gardeners joy. These days the coffee cup is often replaced by the watering can, sloshing away. But at least we don't have to worry about slugs this summer.

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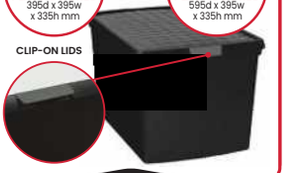

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Reupholster your furniture

A traditional craft restoring your **treasured furniture**

Is your favourite furniture looking and feeling tired, or do you simply want a new look?

Something that you could consider is to have your existing furniture reupholstered. As well as repairing and recovering your furniture so it is like new again, reupholstery avoids the stress of buying new furniture. You may have already invested in good quality furniture that fits your home or have a seat that fits just right. Plus, you would be doing the environment a favour by not sending your furniture to landfill.

Reupholstery is also the ideal solution to refreshing the look of and adding comfort to your favourite furniture.

Almost all styles of furniture can be reupholstered, including club, wing and recliner styles. The existing upholstery is stripped back so that internal repairs can be made. These include repairs to the frame, springs and mechanisms.

Once all internal checks are made, new seat cushions will be fitted and the furniture will be reupholstered in a brand new fabric. Plumbs offer over 800 fabric choices, including over 450 plain options, many from leading design houses such as Clarke & Clarke, William Morris, Warwick and Sanderson.

Cottons, velvets, textured weaves and chenilles can all be used in reupholstery, so a truly bespoke piece of furniture will be created for you.

The reupholsterer, often in your local area, will ensure your furniture is lovingly restored so it is returned to its former glory for you to enjoy for years to come.

Owing to the complexity and enormous skill involved in the reupholstery process, ensure you use a trusted firm with skilled craftspeople, such as Plumbs. Offering numerous years of experience and branded designs, there's also the reassurance of a 5 year quality guarantee.

So you can rest assured that your much loved furniture will be returned to you looking and feeling brand new again.

Whitby - Delft

Plumbs

Crafted by our family. Loved by yours.

FREE Reupholstery
3 pieces for the price of 2†

We are the UK's leading Reupholstery Specialists

Right now, you can enjoy a beautiful transformation for less with our **exclusive 3 for 2 offer** on selected designs.†

Every piece is carefully handcrafted using a beautiful selection of premium fabrics, including our advanced Aquaclean range that makes everyday stains easy to remove with just water, helping your furniture stay looking its best for longer.

Complete the look with our Curtain Event, featuring **up to Half Price** made-to-measure curtains in any fabric, style and lining for the perfect finish.*

- **FREE** local home consultant visit
- **FREE** No-obligation quote and expert advice
- **FREE** replacement seat cushions
- **FREE** arm covers or scatter cushion covers for reupholstery orders.

Acanthus 01 - Teal

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Next 7 Days.

Call Plumbs today to arrange your FREE home consultant visit and your FREE expert advice on how your furniture can be revitalised.

call **01772 83 83 83**
quoting offer code **A767 TPI**

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Plus **Free Accessories worth £50**
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Trustpilot
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T&Cs: †Free reupholstery offer is based on list price on selected designs. Lowest value item is reupholstered free. Antique furniture and recliners excluded from offer. *Percentage discount varies by design, ask your Home Consultant for details, exclusions apply. **£50 free accessories offer is available when you spend £499 or more after discount. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other free gift or accessories promotion, but can be used alongside most other promotional offers. Offer cannot be used on orders already placed. ▲Our interest free credit partner is Payment Assist Ltd, registered in England and Wales 622544. The registered address is Payment Assist Ltd, Pera Business Park, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0PB. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and entered on the Financial Services Register under firm registration number 622544. Credit is subject to status; UK residents age restrictions apply. Sarah Plumb Ltd, trading as Plumbs, Brookhouse Mill, Old Lancaster Lane, Preston, PR1 7PZ. Registered in England and Wales no. 15978225.

Best of Homes & Gardens

Create your dream living space – whether you're investing in your garden or putting the final touches to your grand design, here are some of the best ways to improve your home.

Read more online! Visit *thebestofliving.com* and follow @*bestofsocial*__

Pools, spas & wellness excellence since 1961

SPATA (Swimming Pool and Allied Trades Association) sets the benchmark for quality and ethical trading across the UK industry. We connect homeowners and businesses with accredited members, providing confidence when investing in bespoke swimming pools, in-ground spas and wellness. SPATA members are carefully vetted, professionally trained and committed to strict industry standards and a robust code of ethics.

For expert advice, visit *spata.co.uk*

Peace of mind with home security from ADT

ADT understands how important it is to feel safe and secure in your home and with over 150 years of experience, it's no wonder 170,000 UK households trust ADT to protect what matters most.

Security is at the heart of every ADT system, from protecting the perimeter of the home and alarms that allow pets to roam free whilst set, to smoke detection and cameras to keep an eye on what's going on inside and outside. Each ADT system is tailored to individual needs, meaning you'll never get an off-the-shelf package.

While most home security providers use the term 'smart alarms', an ADT Smart Home security system takes it a step further, all products work in perfect harmony for a truly intelligent experience. Features such as automatic arming and disarming based activity in the home, means you never have to worry about forgetting to set the alarm. Customisable rules for smart plugs connected to lamps can also be an effective deterrent, especially when linked with motion sensors, outdoor cameras or video doorbells, as it enables lamps to automatically be switched on when motion is detected or when the doorbell is pushed.

Additionally, ADT offers a range of cameras, each equipped with built-in motion detection, two-way audio and video analytics that can distinguish between people, animals and vehicles. This gives their customers the ability to set up virtual trip wires and zones for the cameras to focus on, so they'll only be alerted to what matters, when it matters, eliminating unnecessary alerts and nuisance notifications.

ADT offers one of the most advanced home security systems on the market, that all come professionally installed with 24/7 alarm monitoring and maintenance as standard for that added peace of mind.

ADT Always There®

Find out more at *adt.co.uk*

Creating spaces for seamless outdoor living

Every summer brings with it a familiar shift in the rhythm of British life. School gates close, calendars begin to clear and, for a few precious weeks, families find themselves spending more time together than at any other point in the year. Add a spell of prolonged sunshine, and the garden becomes far more than an outdoor space. It becomes the heart of the home.

Across the country, breakfast drifts onto the patio, children disappear into the garden from morning until dusk, and evenings stretch effortlessly from casual drinks into impromptu dinners beneath an open sky. There is a renewed appreciation for simply being outdoors, making the most of the lighter days while they last.

The British relationship with outdoor living has evolved. Once considered a space reserved for occasional summer barbecues, the garden is increasingly being designed as a natural continuation of the home itself. Somewhere to work, dine, entertain and unwind without feeling separated from nature.

Creating spaces that encourage people to spend more time outside requires more than warm weather alone. It calls for thoughtful architecture, intuitive design and an understanding of how people want to live throughout the changing seasons. It is this philosophy that defines Amani, the architectural pavilion by Renson.

Rather than dominating the landscape, Amani becomes part of it. Inspired by the relationship between architecture, nature and wellbeing, it creates refined outdoor spaces where every detail has been carefully considered. Clean, contemporary forms frame the surrounding landscape while integrated technology quietly responds to the environment, allowing comfort to remain constant without ever distracting from the experience.

As the afternoon sun reaches its peak, adjustable roof blades provide cooling shade and natural ventilation, allowing families to remain outdoors comfortably during the hottest part of the day. As temperatures begin to soften and daylight slowly fades, integrated lighting transforms the pavilion into a calm and welcoming setting for long summer evenings spent with friends and family. The beauty of the space lies not in drawing attention to itself, but in the moments it enables.

During the school holidays, those moments become especially valuable. Parents can work from a shaded outdoor retreat while children play nearby. Grandparents gather for relaxed weekend lunches. Friends drop in unexpectedly and stay longer than intended. The garden becomes a place that adapts effortlessly to everyday life, creating opportunities for connection without ever feeling choreographed.

In a world where our attention is constantly divided, there is growing value in environments that encourage us to slow down. Spaces that invite conversation, celebrate natural light and strengthen our connection with the outdoors have become less of a luxury and more of a considered investment in how we choose to live.

The summer holidays will pass, and Britain's warm weather will eventually give way to autumn. Yet the appeal of beautifully designed outdoor spaces extends far beyond a single season. They offer somewhere to gather, to pause and to make the everyday feel just a little more extraordinary.

Discover Amani by Renson at *amani-exteriors.com/en/*

AMANI
CRAFTING ICONIC EXTERIORS

A kitchen engineered to last a lifetime

In 1939, a Danish metalsmith named Holger Nielsen made a pedal bin for his wife's hair salon. That instinct - to build an honest tool that outlives its owner - still runs through everything Vipp makes.

Nowhere is it clearer than in the kitchen. Powder-coated and stainless steel, modular by design, the Vipp kitchen is assembled from a set of building blocks - island, wall and tall units - that you compose around the way you actually cook. It is functional sculpture: as considered at rest as it is in use, and made to be handed down rather than replaced.

As Vipp's official UK partner, Tollgard presents the V1, V3 and V4 at their Belgravia showroom, with the V2 arriving this autumn.

Come and touch the steel.
Book a private viewing at *tollgard.com* or *contact sales@tollgard.com* or call +44 (0)20 7952 6070

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Cooling, heating and hot water, all year round

A heatwave makes the case for cooling on its own. The harder question is what that kit does for you in winter. Daikin Multi+ answers it: an air-to-air heat pump doing three jobs from one outdoor unit, hot water, heating and cooling.

It runs up to four indoor units alongside a hot water tank, so you can cool the bedrooms in the evening and still have a hot shower in the morning. Two tank sizes are available, and one system replaces a gas boiler, oil boiler or immersion heater.

When the weather turns, the same units that cooled your rooms warm them instead. You set the temperature room by room, so a bedroom can sit cooler than the living room and nothing is spent heating empty space.

Indoor units range from slim wall-mounted models to floor-standing designs, so you can choose what works best in each room.

You control it all from your smartphone. The Daikin Onecta app lets you set a schedule, adjust individual rooms or check the hot water tank, wherever you are. It also works with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant.

Multi+ is also Quiet Mark certified, independently tested for low noise, and was recently recommended as best for flats and smaller homes, where the outdoor unit often sits close to a neighbour.

One system, three jobs, and a compact footprint, earning its place all year.

Find out what Multi+ could do for your home at *daikin.co.uk/allinone*

DAIKIN

Enhance your home with sustainable resin surfacing

Transform your property's appearance with a bespoke driveway, patio or pathway from Oltco. Combining durability and style, Recycle Bound surfaces are crafted using a blend of natural stone and recycled waste plastic, helping to reduce plastic pollution while creating a hard-wearing, attractive finish.

Available in a wide range of colour blends, the smooth, low-maintenance surface is anti-slip for added safety and engineered to withstand heavy loads. Because the material is fully SuDS compliant, installation requires no planning permission and is completed efficiently to minimise disruption to your home.

Upgrade your outdoor space with a durable, environmentally conscious alternative to traditional paving that delivers immediate curb appeal and lasting practical benefits.

Call Oltco on 0800 040 7795 or visit *oltco.co.uk* to arrange a free site visit and quotation

oltco

Prevent moth holes this summer

In the summer months, moths cause irreversible damage to cashmere and fine woollens. By the time you notice a moth hole in your favourite knitwear, the damage is already done.

How you store your collection is just as vital as how you wear it. Designed by cashmere care specialists since 2001, The Deluxe Cashmere Protection Pouch provides the ultimate seasonal defence against moths, dust, and light.

Crafted from 100% organic, breathable cotton featuring an elegant gold-on-white pattern, each spacious pouch easily houses up to seven cashmere sweaters. Two translucent organza windows allow you to view your collection at a glance while keeping it impeccably protected all year long.

Do not let hungry pests ruin your cherished wardrobe investments. Protect your knitwear with the specialists trusted for over two decades.

Shop the Deluxe Pouch at *cashmerechoice.co.uk*

Platinum Trusted Service Award

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Creating vibrant communities built on certainty

Modern house buyers increasingly seek more than just brick and mortar; they look for established, well-considered communities designed around people rather than simple construction volume. HarperCrewe creates distinct residential developments where thoughtful architectural design, accessible green spaces and enduring build quality come together to foster a genuine, long-term sense of community and belonging.

Every HarperCrewe property is constructed with environmental sustainability fully integrated as standard. Featuring top-tier Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A-ratings, these future-ready properties are specially engineered to help lower ongoing household utility expenditure, providing practical financial stability for today alongside long-term reassurance for the future. This clear commitment to high-efficiency living forms a central element of the HarperCrewe philosophy and its dedicated focus on delivering lasting value for every homeowner.

From high-specification interior fixtures and fittings to carefully planned spatial layouts, every single detail is specified to ensure exceptional standards of craftsmanship throughout. This unwavering emphasis on structural quality, design precision and operational consistency underpins the brand across every project it undertakes.

To further assist prospective buyers with achieving a seamless property transition, HarperCrewe offers a wide selection of tailored purchasing incentives through its popular Home Ready Collection across every active development site.

Discover HarperCrewe communities currently located across Lichfield, Pershore, Higham Ferrers, Harlington, Creswell and Hodthorpe.

To explore current residential developments, visit *harpercrewe.com*

A smarter route to lower driving costs

Switching from petrol to an electric vehicle offers a practical way to reduce everyday transport expenses. Charging an electric car at home overnight can cost from £7 for up to 350 miles of travel, compared with more than £50 for a typical petrol vehicle covering the same distance.

Given that the average UK driver covers approximately 25 miles per day, routine charging can be managed conveniently at home. Over time, these savings accumulate significantly, freeing up household income for personal priorities such as family holidays, home improvements or seasonal purchases.

Drivers can benefit from lower running costs, predictable morning range and an efficient approach to vehicle ownership. Charging solutions are also available for business premises and commercial workplaces.

Explore home and workplace charging solutions at lower driving costs at *sevadis.com* or call 0330 058 7144

SEVADIS
POWERING ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The art of beautiful lighting

Great lighting does more than catch the eye, it delivers the right light levels for the way a room is used, whether that's cooking, reading, entertaining or relaxing. At där Lighting, every fitting is designed with that balance in mind, combining distinctive British design with the performance needed to illuminate a room.

For more than 50 years, we have designed lighting for real homes. Our UK design studio combines originality, technical expertise and energy-efficient innovation to produce inspiring, unique collections. From a bedside light to grand chandeliers, from just changing a light shade to a complete design scheme, our collections offer unparalleled choice.

Known for exceptional quality, trusted for outstanding customer service and expert lighting knowledge, där lighting has built its reputation on a simple belief: beautiful lighting should perform every bit as well as it looks.

Available through stockists and online at *darlighting.co.uk*

där lighting group

Best of Education

An investment in education lasts a lifetime. Here we round up a range of opportunities to give your children the best possible start in life.

Read more online! Visit *thebestofliving.com* and follow 𝕏 @bestofsocial__

A distinguished state boarding education

Judged 'Outstanding' by OFSTED in its last four inspections, Gordon's School is a non-selective, co-educational state boarding school set in 50 acres of Surrey parkland. Ranked in the top 5% of schools in England for progress, it offers an excellent education alongside outstanding co-curricular opportunities, including Model United Nations, debating, LAMDA, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and competitive sport. Scholarships are available in sport and the creative arts.

Visit *gordons.school* for open day details

A career without limits

For ambitious young people seeking a dynamic alternative to the traditional university route, UKSA offers a structured gateway into the global maritime industry. Spanning superyachts, commercial workboats and broader maritime sectors, a career on the water provides opportunities for international travel and professional advancement.

As a registered maritime youth charity, UKSA works to make these careers accessible to all talented individuals, offering bursary funding and flexible payment options where required.

Based at a four-acre waterfront campus in Cowes on the Isle of Wight, students train in a fully residential environment with accommodation and meals included. From deckhand and steward programmes to fast-track Yachtmaster training, engineering qualifications and workboat careers, courses offer internationally recognised qualifications and clear paths to senior roles.

The flagship four-year Superyacht Cadetship combines professional instruction with paid employment aboard superyachts during sea phases. Trainees earn while gaining vital experience, with options to complete a Foundation Degree and progress to a full BSc. Personalised career guidance, dedicated welfare mentors and wellbeing support help to build the resilience and professionalism needed for demanding maritime environments.

With A-level results day approaching, places remain available for September enrolment on the Superyacht Cadetship, offering an exceptional foundation for a long-term professional career.

To discover more about training programmes and career pathways, visit *uksa.org/sept* or call 01983 203038

The enduring value of a dedicated preparatory education

As many institutions transition to all-through schooling, parents increasingly question whether dedicated preparatory education maintains a distinct advantage. At Newton Prep, that purpose is clear: an environment tailored exclusively for younger pupils provides the strongest foundation for senior school.

Educating children from the term after their third birthday through to Year 8, the school offers structured pathways towards leadership, responsibility and independence. Rather than remaining in the middle tiers of a larger institution, older pupils become mentors and role models. This extended timeline allows children space to mature, given that many do not peak before the age of 11, thereby widening opportunities for 13+ entry.

The curriculum combines academic ambition with broad enrichment, from robotics, coding and philosophy to sport, music and more than 150 co-curricular clubs. In Years 7 and 8, the bespoke Newton Prep Diploma fosters leadership, service and scholarship. This philosophy also informs the 7+ assessment, which evaluates curiosity, creativity and problem-solving.

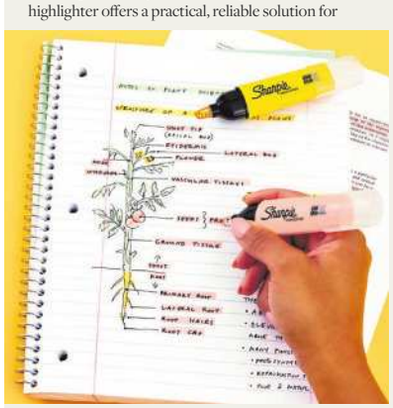
The outcome of this approach is clear. In 2026, pupils secured 221 offers across 38 senior schools alongside 29 scholarships, progressing to leading institutions including Dulwich College, Marlborough College, St Paul's School and Westminster School.

To find out more or attend the open day on Saturday 3 October, visit *newtonprep.co.uk*

Precision tools for clearer note-taking and effective study

Paper Mate InkJoy Gel pens bring structure, clarity and colour to daily note-taking, revision planning and creative projects. Formulated with fast-drying gel ink that glides smoothly across the page, each pen helps to eliminate smudges, reduce unwanted marks, and maintain neat presentation. Designed with an ergonomic grip for comfort during extended writing sessions, the range offers dependable performance alongside a variety of vivid colours that help students organise notes, emphasise key ideas, and make complex concepts easier to digest throughout the school term.

Complementing this, the Sharpie Clear View highlighter offers a practical, reliable solution for precise studying and exam preparation. Featuring an innovative see-through tip, it allows students to see exactly where they are marking on the page, ensuring accurate highlighting and neat underlining without overshooting text or obscuring important details. The bright fluorescent ink dries quickly to prevent smearing, ensuring critical facts, textbook passages, revision sheets and lecture notes remain exceptionally clean, legible and easy to navigate.



Together, these essential stationery tools provide the functional precision, control and day-to-day reliability pupils need to structure information, refine study materials and work efficiently across all academic subjects.

Find out more about Paper Mate and Sharpie stationery solutions at *newellbrands.com*

A holistic prep school education grounded in achievement and discovery

Set within 50 acres adjacent to Windsor Great Park, St John's Beaumont is a co-educational day and boarding prep school for pupils aged 3 to 13. Combining historic character with modern facilities, including a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, dedicated sports centre, specialist music school and science laboratories, the school provides an environment structured to foster individual potential.

Established in 1888, St John's is a world-class accredited High Performance Learning school. Over half of its pupils progress to the leading senior schools Eton, Harrow, Wellington and Winchester, with approximately one-third securing scholarship awards. The school is currently undertaking a major campus renovation, introducing updated boarding accommodation, a dedicated STEAM innovation centre, and expanded library and dining spaces.

Extracurricular provision encompasses more than 80 clubs alongside external partnerships, including, football coaching with Premier League club Brentford FC, theatrical performances with the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in the West End and a choir programme led by Grammy Award-winning director Dr Andrew Lumsden. Recent pupil achievements include national success in IAPS judo and swimming competitions, alongside reaching the final of the national mathematics contest at the University of Oxford.

Prospective families are invited to attend the upcoming Open Morning on Saturday 3 October to tour the estate, meet academic staff and learn more about pupil life.

Book your place and explore the curriculum at *sjbwindsor.uk*

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Keeping track of school kit ahead of the new school term

Back to school brings the annual challenge of managing new uniforms, sports gear, lunchboxes and water bottles. Nametags4u provides a simple solution to ensure that children's belongings are clearly labelled.

Sticky Supatags are suitable for lunch boxes, bottles, stationery, shoes and clothing care labels, while our iron-on, sew-on, and clip-on labels are perfect for all school uniform and sports kit. Clothing Name Stamps are also very popular, as are personalised engraved pencils.

Parents and children can select from an extensive range of colours, designs and uploaded images to create labels they will love. Items are manufactured in the UK and dispatched promptly to help get organised before the new school term begins.

Readers can claim a 10 per cent discount by entering the code Times10 at checkout.

To browse the complete range of products and order personalised labels, visit *nametags4u.co.uk*

Fostering confidence and academic achievement in south-west London

Broomwood is one of Clapham's leading independent prep schools, educating children aged three to thirteen across three welcoming sites. Combining academic ambition with outstanding pastoral care, the school gives every child the confidence to discover their strengths, embrace new challenges and thrive.

Broomwood pupils achieve exceptional results, with a record 48 senior-school scholarships awarded this year and places secured at many of London's leading day and boarding schools. Yet success extends far beyond the classroom. An extensive programme of sport, music, drama, art and outdoor learning develops character, curiosity and a genuine love of learning.

Broomwood will host a whole school open morning on Friday 2 October 2026.

To find out more, email *admissions@broomwood.com*, call 020 8682 8830 or visit *broomwood.com*

A modern path to traditional academic excellence

For more than 160 years, Summer Fields has combined academic rigor with comprehensive pastoral care in Oxford. Pupils join from four years old, benefiting from small class sizes, dedicated tuition and extensive facilities.

Boarding becomes central to school life as boys mature, with around 80 per cent boarding by Year 8 in a supportive, family-led environment. Pupils achieve notable academic results, including four King's Scholarships to Eton in 2026.

Co-curricular life offers 23 sports, 10 annual music concerts and regular drama productions, where pupils achieved a 93 per cent distinction rate in recent LAMDA examinations.

Discover how your son can thrive. Attend the open mornings on 18 September for pre-prep entry or 19 September for prep entry.

Alternatively, arrange a private tour at *summerfields.com*

Back to school stationery for every stage

With the new term fast approaching, high-street stationery expert Ryman has families covered with its extensive Back to School range.

Ryman has been a trusted staple of the high street since 1893, helping generations of families prepare for the classroom. Shopping for a new school year can feel overwhelming, but Ryman's experienced store colleagues are always on hand to help parents choose confidently. Whether you are buying your child's very first pencil case for primary school, upgrading to geometry sets or preparing revision resources for crucial GCSE preparation, you will find exactly what you need.

The diverse collection spans from famous brands to exclusive, design-led fashion ranges that allow students to express their personality. This year's lineup also features incredibly popular Japanese-inspired stationery and officially licensed designs showcasing the latest character trends. By combining specialist retail expertise with genuine value, Ryman caters to every age, academic ambition, and personal style preference.

Back to School is live right now both in-store and online at Ryman.co.uk. Whether you prefer taking advantage of fast, reliable home delivery or enjoy visiting one of their friendly local stores, it is time to get that new stationery feeling to match the new classroom excitement.

Learn more at *ryman.co.uk*

A place to belong: An Irish education with an international outlook

St Columba's College is one of Ireland's leading co-educational boarding and day schools for pupils aged between 12 and 18 years. Founded in 1843, the College combines a rich tradition of academic excellence with a forward-looking approach that prepares young people to thrive in an increasingly global world.

Set within a beautiful 140-acre campus at the foothills of the Dublin Mountains, the College offers an exceptional education in a warm, diverse and welcoming environment.

Inspired by its Church of Ireland ethos, St. Columba's College believe in a truly holistic education that values every aspect of a young person's development: academic, physical, cultural, social and spiritual.

Small class sizes, dedicated teachers and outstanding pastoral care ensure every pupil is known, supported and encouraged to fulfil their potential.

Beyond the classroom, pupils enjoy opportunities in music, drama and sport – including an on-site Golf Academy, run by our very own PGA Professional.

With many teachers and their families living on campus, the College fosters a distinctive sense of community where academic ambition is matched by genuine care, lasting relationships and a strong sense of belonging. Discover a school like no other.

Visit *stcolumbas.ie*, email *admissions@stcolumbas.ie* or call +353 (1) 490 6791 to arrange a visit and learn more about joining our community.

Benefit from six specialist online schools, all in one education group

Every learner is different. That's why Cambridge Online Education Group brings together six specialist online schools and colleges, each designed to support different ages, ambitions and learning needs. From academically ambitious pupils and students with special educational needs to aspiring artists and adults returning to education, our schools provide tailored pathways to success.

The group includes Cambridge Home School Online, Queen's Online School, Bridge Online School, Online College of Art & Design, Access Courses Online and Next Level College. Across every school, students benefit from expert teachers, small class sizes, personalised pastoral support and flexible online learning, helping them thrive wherever they are in the world.

Find the right educational pathway for you at *cambridgeonlineeducation.com*

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Travel

Page 38

‘This summer there’s a new must-have front row seat — a sunlounger in Monte Carlo’

Harriet Walker reviews Europe’s coolest beach club

ISTOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES; VISIT ODENSE

Rorbuer cabins near Reine, Lofoten Islands, Norway

The best Scandi double acts

Stockholm and its archipelago; Oslo and Copenhagen — and don’t forget Finland. Sarah Turner picks the top twin-centre trips

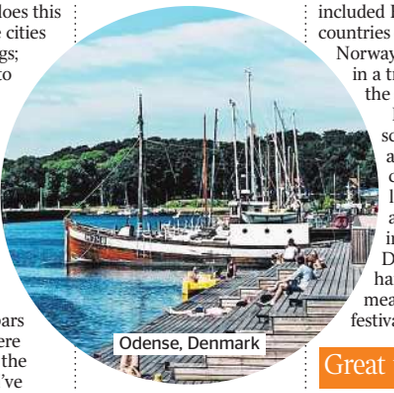
Infrastructure: not usually sexy and rarely fun. Until you decide to explore Scandinavia in summer and you’re in a place where trains pull in next to harbours, ferries go everywhere and buses mesh their timetables to both train and ferry arrivals. If you want to tick off several destinations, even different countries, nowhere is easier to get around than this vast corner of northern Europe.

Here, you can head into the Arctic and dip into the Baltic all without the need for a car (although the roads in Scandinavia are usually superb).

Scandi cities are definitely at their best in summer too. Hot weather is still something to be cherished, especially when the harbour water is so clean that you can dive straight in (no city does this better than Copenhagen) and the cities tend to have extraordinary settings; especially Oslo, with its metro into the mountains.

A Scandinavian summer is special. Many people will head to the coast for the alchemy created by saltwater, sea air, and giving yourself time to enjoy it. Victorian-era *badehotels* — simple summer hotels set right on the beach — are having a revival.

New owners have kept their gentle aesthetic but added wine bars and hip restaurants. And then there are cherished red cabins that dot the landscape, often on tiny islands. I’ve included Finland with the classic Scandi countries of Sweden, Denmark and Norway because it’s so easy to include in a trip. And Finland definitely gets the cabin thing.

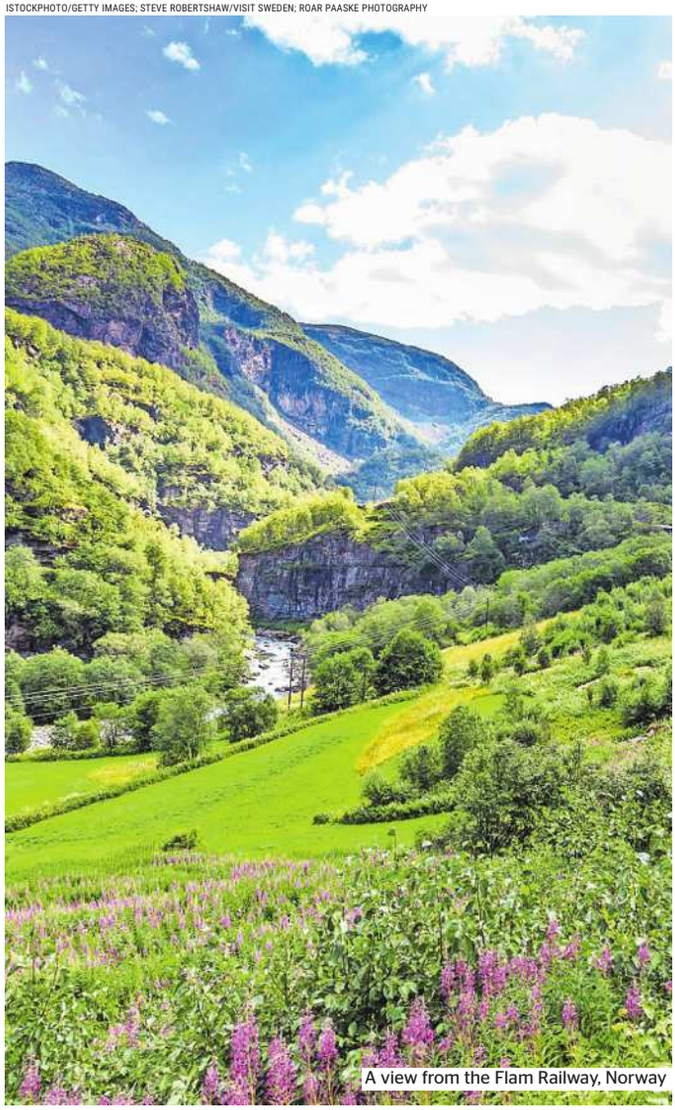


Odense, Denmark

From this week Scandinavian schools start to go back and accommodation becomes cheaper, but the days are still long. September brings autumnal fruits and, increasingly in southern Denmark and Sweden, wine harvesting. Late summer also means some very choice cultural festivals. But lest it all feels a bit too

Great trips next page

ISTOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES; STEVE ROBERTSHAW/VISIT SWEDEN; ROAR PAASKE PHOTOGRAPHY



A view from the Flam Railway, Norway

▶ tasteful, Scandinavians love a funfair too and they will still be open into September. It wouldn't be summer in Sweden if you didn't see a teenager trying to wrestle home a metre-long, 2kg bar of Marabou chocolate.

Yes, a trip to Scandinavia can be expensive. Even though room rates can seem good value — it's traditional, although alas no longer universal, to include a stonking buffet breakfast in the price — other meals and especially alcohol bump up the cost. To get round this, be like the Scandinavians themselves: bring duty-free, have picnics and as you explore, go big on the region's glorious free wraparound nature.

Aarhus and Skagen, Denmark

Aarhus in Jutland is Denmark's second biggest city and has direct flights from the UK. From the ARoS art museum (£23; aros.dk) to its shopping, it's every bit as design-minded as Copenhagen and its four Michelin-starred restaurants point to an equally strong food scene. Between August 28 and September 6, the Aarhus Festival brings together art, discussion and music (aarhus festuge.dk). The stylish 211-room Belle Guldsmeden opened this year near the harbour (B&B doubles from £152; guldsmeden hotels.com). Hiring a car will also allow you to explore one of Scandinavia's most extraordinary landscapes. At Grenen you can see where the North and Baltic seas merge (there is a distinct line because the two seas have different saline levels). There's also the ever-moving Rabjerg sand dune and, as a base, the village of Skagen with its harbour, restaurants and butter-yellow houses is an understandable draw. Brondums is its most famous hotel. It was the headquarters to the Skagen artistic movement in the 19th century, and now has 16 double rooms and five singles (B&B doubles from £173; brondumshotel.com). Fly to Aarhus.

Skagen lighthouse, Denmark

Stockholm, Turku and the Aland Islands

The overnight ferries that travel between the Swedish and Finnish capitals are hugely popular and good value, but this route, in use since the Ice Age, is worth exploring in a more leisurely way. After a night in Stockholm, a daytime ferry will bring you to Mariehamn in the Aland Islands. This collection of about 6,000 rocky outcrops are linked by bridges and ferries with orchards, cycling paths and swimming spots. After two nights, another ferry will take you to Turku in Finland. Straddling the River Aura, it is a great place to learn about local culture. After this, you'll take a train to Helsinki and then an overnight ferry back to Stockholm. It's worth lingering here, too. The Swedish capital is built around its harbour, from the grandeur of the Gamla Stan neighbourhood, with the Royal Palace, to hip Sodermalm. And you can explore Sweden's seafaring history with a trip to the Vasa Museum, built around a perfectly preserved 17th-century flagship which sank after ten minutes in the water; a low point for Swedish design. Sunvil has nine nights' B&B from £1,576pp, including flights, transfers and ferry travel (sunvil.co.uk).

Funen and South Zealand, Denmark

Gentle and intensely rural, the centre of Denmark speaks deeply in the Danish soul. On the island of Funen (a two-hour drive from Copenhagen), the birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen in Odense is a natural place to start (£24: hcandersenshus.dk). Nearby, the Funen Village is a particularly charming museum of Danish life (£17; denfynskelandsby.dk). Head across the bridge to South Zealand and you arrive in Denmark's nascent wine country. Vesterhave Vingaard is an award-winning organic vineyard near Karrebaeksminde; there are tours and accommodation here (room-only doubles from £78; vesterhave-vingaard.dk). A 40-minute drive away, the Frederiksminde in Praesto has a Michelin-starred restaurant and is next to the beach (B&B doubles from £230; frederiksminde.com). Fly to Copenhagen.

Tampere and Helsinki, Finland

Tampere describes itself as Finland's Manchester and yes, it does combine a strong textile heritage with a great music scene. Tampere is regularly voted Finland's nicest city; there are also 70 public saunas, thoughtful museums and a superb lakescape to head into. Even by Finnish standards, nature and this city are inextricably linked. Hotels tend to be good value, including the Lapland Hotels Arena (B&B doubles from £115; laplandhotels.com). In Helsinki, just two hours away by train, you'll find harbourside saunas and fortresses to explore, alongside modernist design at the Arabia museum and outlet store (free; iittala.com), while the Helsinki Festival brings together massed choirs alongside Rufus Wainwright ((August 18 to September 5; helsinkifestival.fi). The Folks Hotel has had a certain groove since it opened in 2020; it's housed in a former train repair depot near the Linnanmaki amusement park (room-only doubles from £105; folkshotels.fi). Fly to Helsinki.

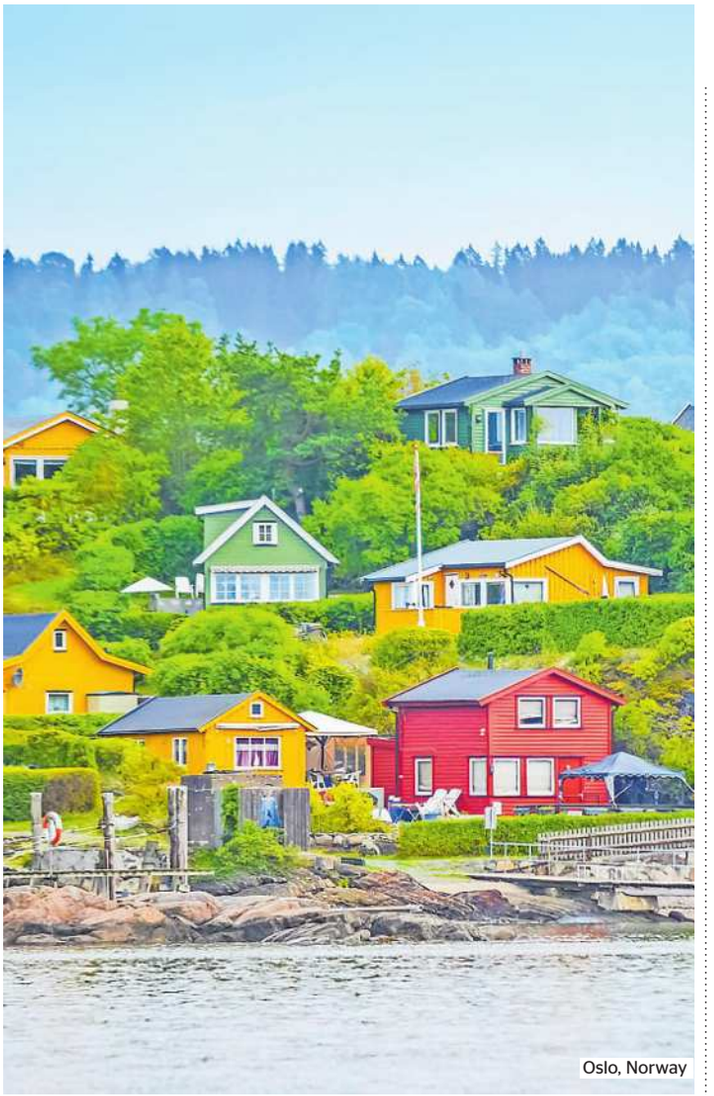
Stockholm and the Stockholm archipelago, Sweden

Sweden's easiest dual-centre trip offers both culture and a contrasting coastline to kayak around, and can be done entirely by public transport. In Stockholm, Djurgarden island contains the Abba museum, the outdoor Skansen museum and the much-loved Grona Lund theme park (you'll also find the Vasa Museum and the Moderna art museum here; royaldjurgarden.se). The Backstage hotel here is an easy walk from everything (B&B doubles from £132; backstagehotelsthlm.com). The island of Sandhamn is a two-and-a-

Ystad, Sweden

Mindeparken, Aarhus, Denmark

Nyhavn harbour, Copenhagen, Denmark



Oslo, Norway

half-hour ferry ride away (from £20; stromma.com). It's yachty (anyone wearing red trousers is likely to have sailed across the Atlantic) but also deeply charming — and if you get a five-day pass for the Waxholmsbolaget ferry, you'll also be able to explore the surrounding archipelago free of charge, including the neighbouring island of Lokholmen (£46; waxholmsbolaget.se). Sandhamns Vardshus, built in 1672, is the island's oldest hotel; its accommodation also includes a family-friendly villa (B&B doubles from £155; sandhamns-vardshus.se). Fly to Stockholm.

Copenhagen and Hornbaek, Denmark

Another of Scandinavia's easy wins: trains take about 90 minutes between the two destinations and going against the tide — staying in Hornbaek during the week and heading to Copenhagen over the weekend — will save money. Hornbaek is hugely popular with Ganni-wearing Copenhageners for all sorts of sensible Nordic reasons including harbourside fish and chips, long beach walks and sea swimming. In September the CORI Hornbaek, a 1930s landmark hotel, reopens refreshed and with a spa (room-only doubles from £447; corihotel.dk). Tivoli, the historic funfair and pleasure gardens that is one of Copenhagen's must-sees, is open until September 20, with music at the weekends that's more jazz-based from mid-August. Guests at the Nimb get into Tivoli free. The hotel also has a Copenhagen rarity: a rooftop pool (room-only doubles from £1,087; nimb.dk). Fly to Copenhagen

Copenhagen and Oslo

Two of Scandinavia's most expensive cities become more affordable if you take the ferry that runs every night between Oslo and Copenhagen. Go Nordic's ferry docks near Copenhagen's newest district, Nordhavn. Billed as the world's first five-minute city — where everything can be reached within that time frame, including shops, cafés and doctors — Nordhavn also has the Scandi essentials of a dedicated swimming area in the harbour and a furniture concept store with its own trendy ten-room hotel. The Audo Boutique Hotel is housed in a 19th-century merchant's house (room-only doubles from £298: audocph.com). Standard berths on the overnight ferry start at £115 (gonordiccruiseline.com) and when you arrive in Oslo, there's the Munch Museum (£20; munch.no), which reopened in a new building in 2021, and Amerikalinjen, a 122-room hotel in the former headquarters of the Norwegian America cruise line just off the harbour (B&B doubles £267; amerikalinjen.com). Fly to Copenhagen.

Stockholm to Copenhagen

This week-long self-guided trip mixes in a bit of train travel — including a three-hour journey between Stockholm and Gothenburg — before starting on the 180-mile Kattegat route, Sweden's first cycle trail. It travels along the west coast, taking in the chic resort of Saro and plenty of seafood before a 20-minute ferry takes you to Helsingor in Denmark and its Kronborg Castle (which inspired Shakespeare to write *Hamlet*). The 33-mile path to Copenhagen is even easier (this bit of Denmark has a fairly flat landscape, especially compared with its neighbours) and ebikes are available. Headwater has seven nights' B&B from £1,809pp, including bicycle hire and luggage transfers (headwater.com). Fly to Stockholm.

Ystad/Skane and Bornholm

Geographically closer to Copenhagen than to Stockholm, the region of Skane in the far south of Sweden is a hugely popular holiday destination. Ystad, the town at its heart, surrounded by both hollyhocks and hip restaurants, has a harbour and extensive beaches. In one of Ystad's distinctive mustard-coloured houses, the Sekel Garden hotel dates from 1793 (B&B doubles from £101; sekelgarden.se). From here you can get a ferry (roughly 80 minutes) to the foodie, arty island of Bornholm, which has a similar hold on the Danish imagination with 227 square miles of dune-filled coastline alongside ceramic studios and farms. Allinge Badehotel, open only between May and the end of September, continues to adhere to the sense of simplicity that originally defined the *badehotel* movement in the 19th century; there is no swimming pool, spa or room service but it has a superb beachfront setting and a wine bar (B&B doubles from £101; allingebadehotel.dk). Fly to Copenhagen.

Ven, Sweden

Malmo and Ven, Sweden

In southern Sweden, Malmo has long prided itself on its diversity and is packed with museums and design stores. There's an airport too, although it's usually cheaper to fly to Copenhagen; direct trains from its airport cost about £10 and take 20 minutes. The Story Hotel is central and cool and walking distance from the train station and Malmo's 16th-century core (B&B doubles from £151; hyatt.com). In the Oresund, the stretch of water between Denmark and Sweden, the island of Ven is easy to reach by train, followed by a short ferry. Visitors can get round the three square miles of sand-fringed simplicity on its bright yellow rental bikes. The island's distillery has hotel rooms and an acclaimed restaurant, serving produce from the island (half-board doubles from £265; houseofven.com). Fly to Malmo or Copenhagen.

Stockholm and Are, Sweden

In winter, Are becomes Sweden's largest ski resort and the sleeper train from Stockholm can turn into one big party (from £25; sj.se). In summer though, this part of Sweden's Norrland region should be in verdant, berry-picking mode and to make it easy to access, its chairlifts stay open throughout August and at the weekends in September (returns from £18; skistar.com). Copperhill Mountain Lodge is elevated in all sorts of ways (B&B doubles from £110; copperhill.se). An innovative, largely timber building 730m above sea level, it has an ethos of gently encouraging you to head into the countryside with organised hikes, including ones with picnics. But there is also the opportunity to mellow into the sunsets with cocktails and Ibiza-style beats. The Lodge's restaurant Niesti focuses on food from the region, so expect dishes such as moose tartare and Arctic char. Meanwhile the spa, with swimming pools and plenty of LED-led treatments, will also deliver a thorough Swedish massage (50-minute treatments from £78). Fly to Stockholm.

Oslo and the Flam Railway, Norway

This self-guided Norway in a Nutshell trip from Baltic Travel Company offers the chance to do a classic Norway circuit. You'll get a couple of days to soak up Oslo's decidedly cool restaurant-lined waterfront — time your visit for September 11 and you'll be there for Culture Night when the city's museums open late into the evening (oslokulturnatt.no). The five-hour train journey to Myrdal has plenty of fjords en route to admire, but the next leg on the Flam Railway has switchbacks past waterfalls before it makes a dramatic 900m descent to Sognefjord. After this, the trip uses a combo of boats and buses to bring the wildly scenic Naeroyfjord Valley into focus. The trip ends in Bergen, which has frontier town energy and is surrounded by rugged Norwegian scenery, although Mount Floyen does have a funicular railway. Seven nights'

More trips on next page

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3,000 hours of sunshine each year bathes the beaches that wrap the 90 miles around its coast, ranging from those well served by shops and restaurants, to stretches of golden sand that are totally undeveloped. The beaches, along with the verdant volcanic landscapes, are a major reason the island is a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

- **Santa Cruz, Tenerife**
- **Santa Cruz, La Palma**

Fondly referred to as "La Isla Verde" (the green island) and "La Isla Bonita" (the beautiful island), La Palma is smaller than many of its popular neighbouring islands, but it holds no less natural splendour

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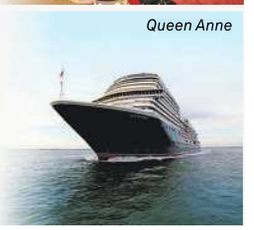

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▶ B&B from £1,295pp, including flights (baltictravelcompany.com).

Umea and Grano Beckasin, Sweden

Vasterbotten, the part of Sweden that faces Finland across the Gulf of Bothnia, is green and pleasant in summer even by Scandi standards and a nice left-field choice for a trip if you're happy to do a little driving. Start in the coastal city of Umea, once an important trading port and part of the Sapmi region, which covers the northern areas of Norway, Russia and Finland and is central to the Lappish nomadic lifestyle. Today it's also a university town that has more than just academic charm. Stora Hotellet is a beautifully restored 1895 seaman's mission turned boutique hotel with its own deli and cinema (B&B doubles from £84; storahotelle tumea.se). Then, 90 minutes' drive northwest at Grano Beckasin Lodge, you can sleep in your very own russet-coloured cabin, eat the best of the region in its organic restaurant and relax in pristine nature. And if you are feeling outdoorsy, you can build a raft on the banks of the River Ume (room-only doubles from £128; granobeckasin.com). Fly to Umea via Stockholm.

Gothenburg and Lake Vanern, Sweden

As you come in to land at Gothenburg airport, you'll see drama-filled inlets and islands amid a flurry of boats and small ferries. The whole of Scandinavia works as a family break, but this city on Sweden's west coast should suit every generation. Starting a trip here brings sea swimming (Harbour bath in Jubileumsparken with three different areas is the most fun), the longstanding Liseberg funfair, the World of Volvo museum and boat trips into the archipelago. This Regent trip combines the city with a stay on Lake Vanern, Scandinavia's largest lake. Covering 2,160 square miles, it's a freshwater haven for sea eagles, otters and salmon. Naturum Vanerskargarden Victoriahuset in Vastergotland is a nature centre and a 15-room hotel. In the grounds of Lacko Castle, there are hikes, kayaking and a chance to explore Lake Vanern's own little islands. Six nights' B&B from £1,215pp, including flights and car hire (regent-holidays.co.uk).

Bodo, Norway

Bodo and the Lofoten Islands, Norway

Just inside the Arctic Circle, the town of Bodo still has long summer days in August and by late September there's a chance of seeing the northern lights. It's got a fun outdoorsy vibe, with Rib trips to a nearby maelstrom, a craft brewery and a Cold War-era bunker that's now an aviation museum. A fly-drive holiday here allows you to combine a trip staying at the traditional Nordic cabins of Nusfjord Arctic Resort, along with three nights at the Svinoya Rorbuer hotel in Svolvaer. This harbour town is the gateway to the Lofoten Islands with easy fjord cruises and hiking. Best Served Scandinavia has six nights' B&B from £1,570pp, including flights and car hire (best-served.co.uk).

Iitti and Lake Saimaa, Finland

Sweden may have a bigger lake (Lake Vanern), but Finland has roughly 187,000 freshwater lakes across the country. Discover the World's Taste of Finnish Lakeland twin-centre trip will help you to navigate them in southeast Finland. At the Radalla Resort, two hours' drive northeast of Helsinki, alongside the tried-and-tested sauna and swim options, there's also the five-mile Radansuu hiking trail and cycling along the historic Kimola Canal, the breathtaking landscapes of Repovesi National Park and the thrills of Tykkimaki amusement park. A couple of hours' drive east, Sahanlahti Resort lies on the shores of Lake Saimaa with atmospheric little red cabins and a great restaurant that keeps food determinedly local — summer favourites include smoked ham and organic barley porridge. That should set you up nicely to explore the prehistoric Astuvansalmi rock paintings, the largest rock art site in northern Europe, dating back about 5,000 years, and Kummakivi, a balancing rock from the Ice Age. Five nights' B&B from £454pp, including car hire (discover-the-world.com). Fly to Helsinki

Gothenburg, Sweden

Bergen and Hardangerfjord, Norway

For a gentle take on Norway's fjord country, this Macs Adventures walking holiday heads from Bergen to Hardangerfjord, known as the orchard of Norway, using ferries, buses and trains to notch up overnight stays in the fjordside village of Ulvik before arriving in Lofthus for three nights. None of the walks is more than 12 miles and options include hiking to the four waterfalls of the Husedalen valley or climbing the 616 stone steps used by monks in medieval times to access the Hardangervidda mountain plateau. Head there this month and you could catch the Hardanger Music Festival (August 26 to 30; hardangermusikkfest.no). Seven nights' B&B from £1,835pp (macsadventure.com). Fly to Bergen

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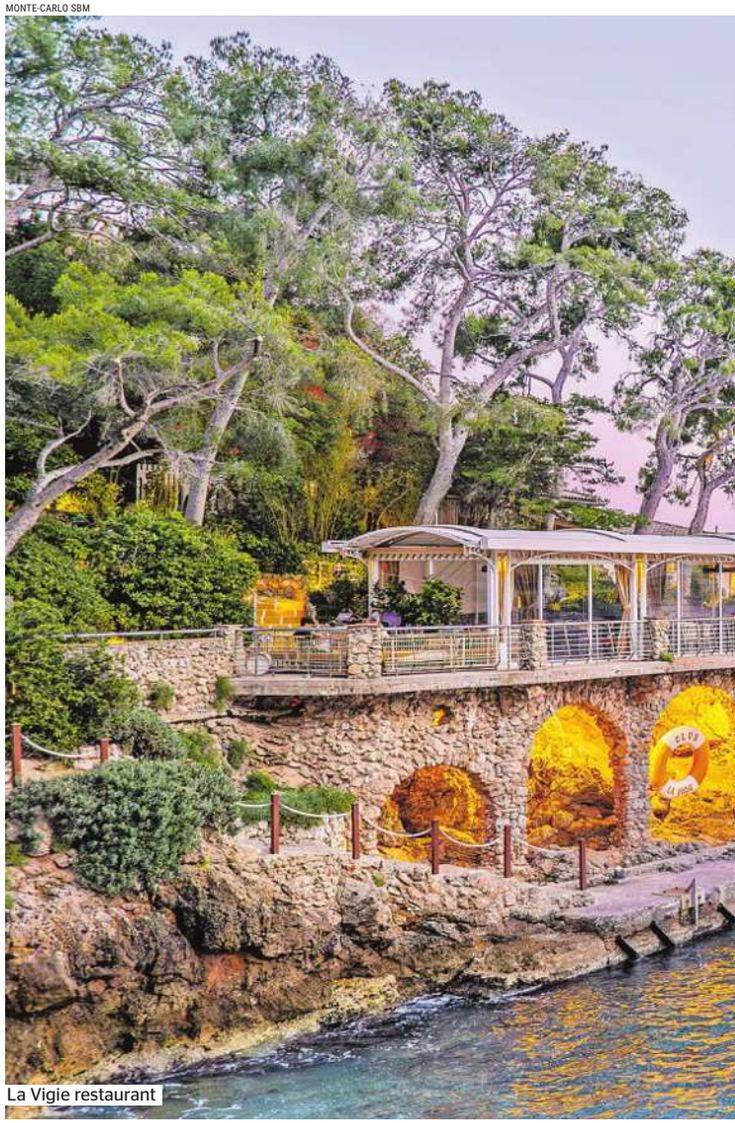
Luxury France

The fashion editor's verdict: the Med's most stylish beach club

Jacquemus at Monte Carlo beach offers Instagrammable umbrellas by its saltwater pool and guests as glamorous as you'd find on the catwalk, says Harriet Walker

MONTE-CARLO SBM



La Vigie restaurant

New York, Paris... the beach? I've watched plenty of fashion week shows over my years as the Times fashion editor, but this summer there's a new must-have front row seat. Reclining on a sunlounger with a view down the Monte Carlo Beach pontoon made famous by Audrey Hepburn in the Fifties, I can hardly concentrate on my book thanks to all the head-turning outfits strutting past. It's a tough job, I know.

Head-to-toe Hermès from kaftan to sandals. Psychedelic-print Pucci across the briefest of bikinis. Louis Vuitton everything, including sunglasses and washbag. Heels, slashed to the navel leopard print and all the other pneumatic accessories you might expect. Among this crowd, a Chanel tote is for the beach rather than for best. For the world's one per cent, holiday hangouts are the new catwalk.

Even the parasol above me has a designer label on it. Simon Porte Jacquemus is the man behind the Monte Carlo Beach Club's latest haute look; everything, from the pontoon's highly Instagrammable wedding cake-tiered umbrellas, sky-blue loungers and black and white-striped towels to yet more front-row spots alongside its Olympic-sized seawater pool, has been curated by French fashion's coolest millennial talent. Around the Med — and the world — designer brands are popping up for the season, building out their universes from boutique to beachfront. Just down the road, La Rose des Vents beach club is hosting its own takeover by Gucci.

It's a match made in Riviera glam heaven, with an eye on bringing in a younger and more social media-savvy crowd to this Monegasque haunt. Jacquemus, 36, might be one of Paris's most celebrated hipsters, but he is from Provence and proclaims his greatest loves to be "Marseille and the Eighties". He has even installed a branded step-and-repeat board for guests to pose in front of, something perhaps only the designer behind a viral £675 metre-wide sunhat might think of.

His more wearable designs are available in two stores on site and modelled IRL by customers enjoying the Mykonos vibe at the hotel's super-fun Maona restaurant, where classic Greek sharing-style lunches stretch on until even the DJ finishes (mains from £38).

Jacquemus dresses Zendaya on the red carpet, Parisiennes on their wedding day and the likes of Kendall Jenner and Bella Hadid aboard their yachts, of which there are more than a few floating on the horizon. Periodically their occupants arrive on speedboats to eat at La Vigie, the restaurant perched practically on top of the waves at the end of the piney peninsula the 40-room hotel is built into. The chef Simone Zanoni's rarefied take on trattoria pasta and ultra-fresh crudo is perhaps as pared back as this part of the world gets. Special mention to their sea-view tiramisu (mains from £54).

Monte Carlo Beach Hotel — of which the beach club is part (though it also offers a £128 day rate depending on the season and is also open to local members, although I am reliably informed the waiting list is both extensive and hyper-exclusive) — is a 1930s art deco classic, built into the cliff it sits on. All 40 of its light and airy, muralled rooms have a full sea view.

Monte Carlo Beach Club is, technically, not in Monaco itself but just next to the border in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. That

Need to know

Harriet Walker was a guest of the Monte Carlo Beach Club, which has B&B doubles including beach club access for £850 (montecarlosbm.com). Fly to Nice

More hotels and what to do

Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo
No address in Monte Carlo is more storied. This belle époque palace on Casino Square has welcomed them all: Churchill and Chaplin, Rockefellers and royalty, and artists such as Dalí, Callas and Warhol. As celebrated are its food and drinks venues, specifically Le Bar American and Alain Ducasse's extraordinary three-Michelin-star restaurant Le Louis XV. The grande dame of glamour is more modern than her exterior suggests, the room decor pared back to streamlined sophistication.
Details Room-only doubles from £532 (montecarlosbm.com)

Hotel Metropole Monte-Carlo
There's a nod to baroque in soft sunlit yellows and pale Mediterranean blues, with accents from plum velvet banquettes and Colefax & Fowler wall fabrics — the look is from the stylebook of Jacques Garcia, the French designer who has overseen the Italianate-style palace for more than two decades. Although set back from the beach there's a cracking rooftop pool styled by Karl Lagerfeld, plus a highly rated spa in partnership with Guerlain. Among the dining options is two-star Les Ambassadeurs by Christophe Cussac.
Details Room-only doubles from £404 (metropole.com)

Where the art is
The Nouveau Musée National de Monaco is your venue to understand Monte Carlo as an art town. It hosts a blockbuster exhibition from its collection of art A-listers, currently the surrealist Victor Brauner (£5; nmnm.mc). Pair it with Opera Gallery, which is showing *American 80s: From Warhol to Basquiat* until the end of August (free; operagallery.com).

Village ways
Before any visit you need to know that Èze, three miles west of Monaco, is no stranger to tourism. Reconcile yourself to summer crowds and the village is a beauty, a medieval eyrie coiled on a mountain top. It's worth every cobbled pinch-point for the Jardin Exotique: lovely planting, elegant statutory, extraordinary eagle's eye views of the Mediterranean (£9; jardinexotique-eze.fr).
James Stewart

The beach club's pool

Elsa restaurant

means you can see the principality's skyscrapers without feeling them loom, while the bright lights, fountains and yet more luxury boutiques of Place du Casino are an easy ten-minute taxi (or twenty-minute shuttle bus) away. I swap my ogling on the pontoon for a seat outside the Café de Paris and immediately start people-watching again. Perhaps this is why everybody wears giant sunglasses here, so all the staring isn't quite so obvious.

Those in search of a more private atmosphere might enjoy the Bar Américain inside the Hôtel de Paris, whose wood panelling and velvet upholstery have absorbed live music every evening since the days when Joséphine Baker and her children were housed here by her friend Grace Kelly. More recently, Lady Gaga has taken up the piano stool in this enclave — although morning people might prefer to sample the world-famous pastry chef Cédric Grolet's patisserie boutique. Croissants as photogenic as they are delicious will prompt you to reassess the ones you've been eating until now.

Another short bus ride — or even shorter taxi — up the cliffs above the port brings you to the older Monaco-Ville, or "the rock". On this side of town the bling is of the historic church variety, such as the 19th-century Cathedral of Our Lady Immaculate, where Kelly was both married and buried and whose splendour can be peeked at during service times. The high-net-worth boutiques of the Golden Square are one such place of pilgrimage worth seeing for oneself, but the quiet medieval streets of the old town and shaded slopes of Jardin Saint Martin act as something of a palate cleanser.

There are plenty of those on offer between the many courses at Marcel Ravin's Michelin-starred Elsa restaurant at the Monte Carlo Beach Club. Think surf and turf of the highest order, in which local seafood meets top-grade wagyu, foie gras and a cheese chariot to rival Ben-Hur's. Yes, the food is rich but so is everyone eating it (mains from £68).

Back at the pool and the curtained-off beach cabanas, where the Jacquemus sunbeds are grassy green with chintz pillows, the off-duty models order freshly hewn chunks of watermelon and mango presented on beds of ice and palm leaves before their next sashay along the catwalk and into gentle, warm, bath-like waters. You've heard of places to see and be seen: for the designer beach club set, that's by the sea and piscine.

Dior at Il Riccio, Capri

MORE DESIGNER BEACH CLUB POP-UPS

Gucci at La Rose des Vents, Monaco
Italian tradition meets Monaco heritage with this summer's partnership to mark 60 years since the Florentine house created its signature Flora print on a silk foulard for Princess Grace. Its swirling blooms bedeck loungers and parasols while the real deal cluster from overhanging pergolas — and are available scattered across a capsule range from the on-site pop-up. Open until October (sunbeds from £60; larosedesvents.com).

Dolce & Gabbana at San Domenico Palace, Taormina
It's a bumper year for Dolce fans, after the megabrand's lavish Alta Moda catwalk show in Taormina last month launched this summer's swirling Palme resort theme in its native Sicily. Blending nature and design, the print covers beach and lounge areas as well as It bags and £750 towels. There are also other D&G beach club takeovers in Clap House, Ibiza; Hotel Cala di Volpe, Portocervo; Twiga, Forte dei Marmi; Le Carillon, Portofino; La Cabane, Marbella; and Casa Amor, St Tropez. The Taormina location is open to the end of September. B&B doubles from £3,217 in September; fourseasons.com. Fly to Catania.

Burberry at One&Only, Athens, and Belle Rives, Antibes
You'll find the classic Burberry check reimagined for sun-splashed deckchairs and loungers here — as well as the hotel lift. They'll complement the brand's first swimwear collaboration with the A-list's favourite bikini brand Hunza G, whose crinkly pieces are now adorned with the usual trench liner pattern. Open until October, B&B doubles in September from £627; bellesrives.com. Fly to Nice. B&B doubles in September from £1,095; oneandonlyresorts.com. Fly to Athens.

Dior at Il Riccio, Capri
At the designer Jonathan Anderson's first beach club for the label, palest blue and white striped parasols line the rocky outcrop of Anacapri on the Dioriviera dining deck at the Jumeirah Capri Palace. The sea urchins that inspired the restaurant's name take top billing on the menu. Guests can take off across the bat in a fleet of sailing boats decorated with motifs by Monsieur Dior's friend, the illustrator Christian Bérard. Until the end of summer. B&B doubles in September from £1,634; jumeirah.com. Fly to Naples.

Alo, St Tropez & Bodrum
Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber's favourite LA sportswear brand pops up this summer with a wellness-focused offer for those who like their sunbathing with a side of yoga, sound baths and breathwork. Forget cocktails: the drinks delivered to your chic and subtly branded linen cabanas are custom juices designed to hydrate and restore glow. Until September, single sunbeds from £85; gigi-restaurant.com, mains from £28. Fly to Nice or Bodrum.

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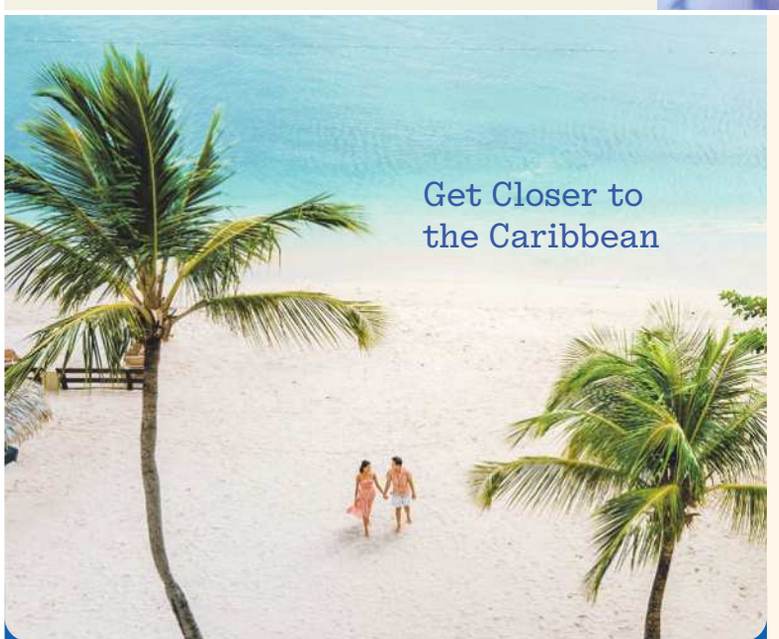

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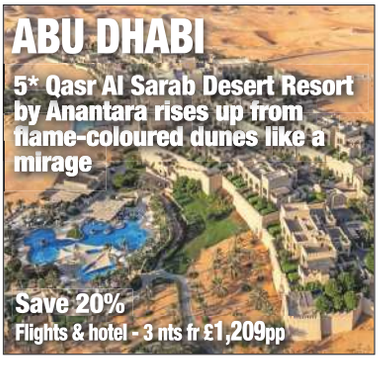

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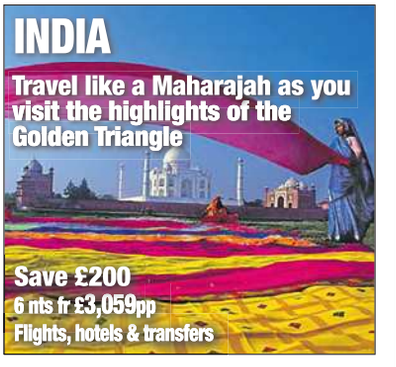

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Sri Lanka

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The family friendly 3* Club Dolphin Hotel is well located on a beautiful stretch of beach on the west coast of Sri Lanka. Its stylish, comfortable surroundings and varied amenities make it the ideal holiday destination.

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My 46-mile hike through New

The Queen Charlotte Track on South Island delivers empty beaches and sweeping views, says Helen Pickles

I don't want to put you off walking the Queen Charlotte Track — a glorious 46-mile trail that loops up and down the isolated forest-cloaked hills of the Marlborough Sounds at the north-eastern tip of New Zealand's South Island — but when we boarded the boat that took us from Picton harbour to the trail's starting point (only accessible by water), the two other people on board, birdwatchers, stared at us, open-mouthed: "You're doing the walk?"

We tried to look nonchalant as the boat lurched up and down through the choppy grey waters (they cancelled sailings the following day) and smiled gamely when we landed an hour later at our destination, Ship Cove. We immediately pulled on waterproof overtrousers and generally swaddled ourselves; it was April, the tail end of a cyclone and drenchingly wet and windy. However... I have done this walk in December in shorts and a T-shirt. And by the end of day two on this April visit, the sun had put its hat on.

My point? New Zealand weather is as capricious as Britain's. So, be prepared.

The joy of this four-day hike — apart from the luxuriant vegetation, joyous bird song, sense of isolation, breath-catching ridge-line views and dazzlingly empty beaches — is that it's the only long New Zealand trek where, if booked ahead, your luggage can be transported between overnight hotels. (Camping or more basic accommodation are other options, but you'll need to carry and cook.) This was a definite bonus for my friend Sarah and me as we squelched through our first 11-mile day carrying only lightweight backpacks and knowing that drying facilities, hot showers, generous meals and a well-stocked bar awaited us.

The forest-cloaked hills of the sounds are, in fact, drowned river valleys, stretching out like green fingers into the Pacific Ocean in a latticework of inlets, bays, peninsulas and ridges, created by a combination of changing sea and land levels. The trail — usually done northeast to southwest, between Ship Cove and Anakiwa — swings up and down and around the ridgeline that separates Queen Charlotte Sound and Kenepuru Sound, two of the main waterways of the Marlborough Sounds. Queen Charlotte was the wife of King George III and Captain James Cook honoured her when he anchored off Ship Cove in 1770, claiming South Island for the Crown. Route-finding here is virtually idiot-proof: the pavement-width track has signposts — unobtrusive but in all the right places — with walking times and distances to key points on the route.

Despite the unforgiving rain on that first day, it was impossible to have dampened spirits for long. The vegetation is tropical-lush, with lofty nikau palms, huge ponga ferns, majestic rimu trees and native beeches with their fungus-covered trunks arching over the path like a ceremonial guard of honour. It was so thick, and the path twists and turns so much, that just when we expected to see the sea on one side, it suddenly appeared on the other.

We had a couple of steady climbs on the first day, broken up with a lovely secluded beach at Schoolhouse Bay, which would make an ideal picnic lunch stop under drier circumstances. The puffing stuff comes later on the trail. We were pleasantly tired, if soggy, when we arrived in the late afternoon at the isolated Furneaux Lodge, which sits dipping its toes into Endeavour Inlet.

As with all the places we stayed, the Furneaux was a cut above the typical hiker's pitstop. Our two-room cottage had big double beds, masses of towels, smart bathroom goodies and private decking that was perfect for sundowners. Although considerably extended since, the lodge was one of the first houses on the sounds, built in the early 1900s as a holiday home for a Wellington-based biscuit manufacturer whose family did much to protect the surrounding native bush. The dark-wood-panelled bar-restaurant, with its rustic homestead feel and long veranda, is part of the original building and was where we expected to be served standard pub-style hiker's food. Instead the menu offered smart dishes such as pan-seared snapper with feta and couscous, and lamb shank with confit garlic and thyme mash.

Punga Cove, our next destination, was only across the other side of the inlet, but that's like saying Bristol is just across the water from Cardiff: it's a long way round. However, it was an easy eight-mile walk, the path twisting pleasantly around the numerous indentations, with stunning views over Endeavour Inlet.

We passed tiny beaches, picnic tables thoughtfully provided by the Department of Conservation (DOC) at optimum view-worthy spots, dipped in and out of thick and thin bush, and crossed a river that was as clear and sparkling as a swimming pool. The DOC looks after most of the track with private landowners caring for the rest, both doing an admirable job of signposting and track maintenance.

A pool, hot tub and kayaks were on offer at Punga Cove, where chalet-style rooms spread up the hillside. Over dinner in the restaurant — again handsome food such as pan-fried gurnard with charred fennel — we picked out familiar faces, people we'd crisscrossed with on the route as we

Kenepuru Sound seen from the Queen Charlotte Track

More active holidays in New Zealand

Cycling across South Island
Pedal past dense rainforest, glacier-carved waterfalls and granite peaks on this two-week cycling tour with Active Adventures, in a group of 12 or so. Staying in lodges and hotels on a round trip from Christchurch, you'll ride the West Coast Wilderness Trail, trace the Hawea River, whizz past the vineyards of Gibbston Valley and ride from the country's highest peak, Mount Cook, to the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, there are dinners in local pubs, a two-hour nature cruise on the Milford Sound fjord, hiking on the Franz Josef glacier and a free day in Queenstown, dubbed the adventure capital of New Zealand.
Details Thirteen nights' half-board from £6,699pp, including internal travel, equipment, activities and some extra meals (activeadventures.com). Fly to Christchurch via Auckland

Walk from Auckland to Christchurch
Trek from north to south on an epic 18-night hiking tour with Explore from Auckland to Christchurch. Walking between three and five hours a day in a group of up to 15, this guided trip crosses both islands and takes in snow-dusted mountains, mirror-still fjords, secluded bays and national parks. There are plenty of unique activities between daily walks, including a visit to Waimangu Valley's geothermal park with its hot springs and bubbling mud pools, a sightseeing tour of the capital, Wellington, a trip to Motuara Island Bird Sanctuary and a Maori hangi dinner cooked using heated rocks in a pit oven.
Details Eighteen nights' B&B from £5,720pp, including internal travel, activities and some extra meals (explore.co.uk). Fly to Auckland and from Christchurch

Five-star thrills
Get the adrenaline pumping on a luxury tailormade trip with Abercrombie & Kent from Auckland to Queenstown, staying at plush five-star hotels. Included activities range from zip-lining in Okoheriki Forest, mountain biking around Rotorua and tubing along an underground river in the Ruakuri Caves to jet-boating on the glacier-fed Dart River and a helicopter tour over the Southern Alps to Milford Sound. You can also add on extra thrills such as a private charter on an America's Cup yacht in Auckland's Waitemata Harbour, a helicopter landing on the Fiordland Glaciers and a nightwalk in Redwood Forest.
Details Ten nights' B&B from £12,995pp, including internal travel and activities (abercrombiekent.com). Fly to Auckland and from Queenstown
Siobhan Grogan

Zealand's forest-cloaked hills

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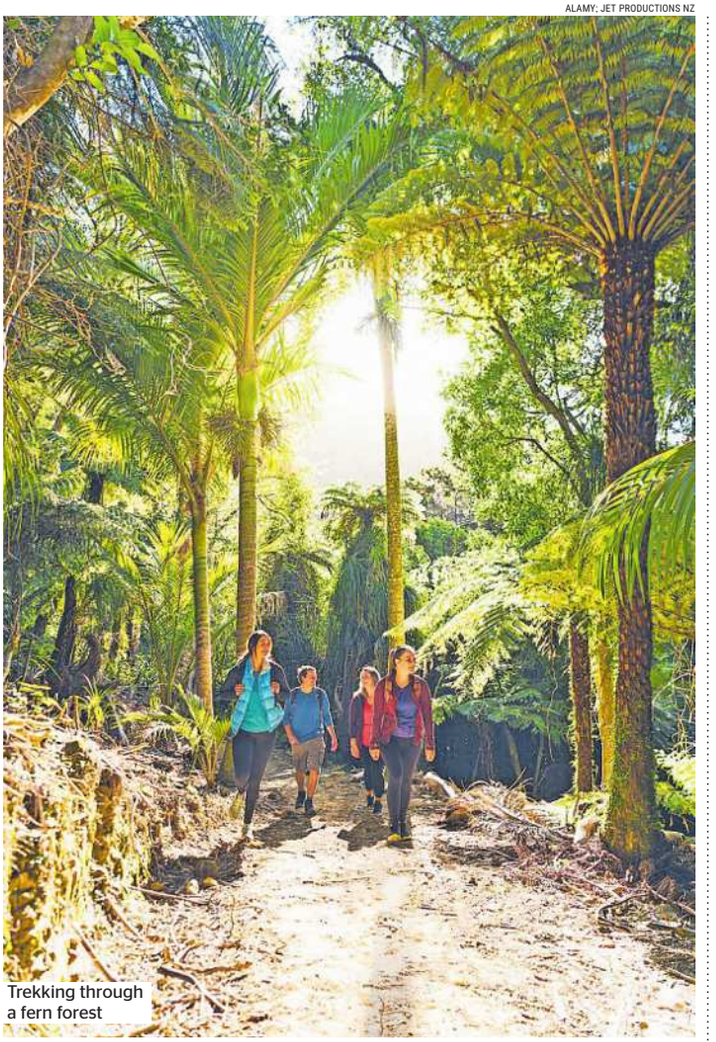

Trekking through a fern forest

> The vegetation is tropical-lush, with lofty palms and huge ferns

variously stopped to admire views or have lunch. Naturally, we nicknamed them: the Hot Tub Girls, four jovial twentysomethings from Kaikoura on South Island, who hit the tub on arrival; the Aussie Nine, middle-aged women from the Brisbane area who get together for annual "big walks"; Glamorous Grandma's Family, three generations celebrating Grandpa's 70th; and the lovely Kim and Rob from Noosa, Queensland, who were just too sweet and smiling for nicknames and who praised Sarah and me as "superheroes", despite the fact that they were well into their seventies.

Day three started with an early breakfast: ahead lay 16 miles with two significant climbs. A steady slog took us onto the ridge line, which we tracked for most of the day. Queen Charlotte Sound lay on the southern side, dotted with pearly-white craft, including the inter-island ferries heading in and out of Picton; on the northern side, on the quieter Kenepuru Sound, we could pick out the black lines of mussel beds. The trees were smaller at this height (about 400m), the path soft with pine-like needles, the only sounds the laughter of the Aussie Nine somewhere behind us. We took the short but sharp uphill detour to Eatwell's Lookout, which gives the finest view over the sounds: peninsulas and islands stretched out like sleeping dogs into the distance. Way over to the east, that hazy smudge was the southern tip of North Island, we guessed.

After a snack stop at the Bay of Many Coves shelter — one of several handy DOC shelters, but also where wekas (flightless birds the size of small chickens) will do their best to nick your food — we reached the track's highest point, 475m. From there it was an exhilarating walk with every little turn bringing an even better photo opportunity, before a steady descent into Portage Bay.

By now, I had got a little blasé about our accommodation. I wasn't surprised that my room had a super-kingsize bed, swish bathroom, decent coffee and a private terrace perfectly angled to catch the sunset. Dinner offered venison, snapper and pumpkin gnocchi, while breakfast included fluffy pancakes with whipped cream, a corn fritter stack, and a gargantuan Hiker's Special of bacon, tomatoes, mushrooms, chorizo, poached eggs and hash browns.

Need to know

Helen Pickles travelled independently

Day four kicked off with a steep climb, followed by another, which seemed a bit unkind, but was tempered by the 360-degree views: endlessly unfolding ridges of green-cloaked hills dipping into swimming-pool-blue waters. We'd heard plenty of birdsong on the other days, but today it seemed richer — the sweet chimes of the bellbird, the distinctive two-tone of the tui and the chirpy cheep-cheep of the fantail.

Fanciful though this may sound, I swear the pretty little fantail bird — their black-and-white tails are indeed a perfect fan shape — that danced around me as we neared journey's end in Anakiwa was there to welcome me. We popped out of the trees and suddenly were back among people, houses, and a bay full of yachts.

Like everyone else, we gravitated to the Green Caravan Café opposite the pier from which we'd be collected for the 30-minute boat ride back to Picton. The Aussie Nine were in full chattering mode, we shared chocolate, we checked whether people were on the 3.30pm or 4pm sailing (it turned out there's only one, and you just get on it). Suddenly there was a commotion and a wail: "I'm so tired, I want to cry!" It was the Hot Tub Girls arriving hot, weary but smiling. Cue cheers and laughter. You might swear at some of the hills on this walk but, for sure, you will laugh. And laugh at the sheer gorgeousness of it.

How to do the Queen Charlotte Track

How to get there

Picton, 18 miles north of Blenheim, is the base for starting and finishing the walk. Fly to Wellington then take a 30-minute flight to either Picton or Blenheim (from £37 return; soundsair.com). The shuttle or taxi from Picton airport into town takes about ten minutes (from £11; soundsair.com). Blenheim airport has one daily InterCity bus to Picton; more frequent services depart from the city (from £7; intercity.co.nz).

More frequent daily 45-minute flights depart Wellington for Nelson, 87 miles west of Picton (from £46; airnewzealand.co.uk). Buses to Picton take 2 hours and 15 minutes (from £25; intercity.co.nz). Or take the three-and-a-half-hour ferry from Wellington to Picton, across the Cook Strait (from £21; interislander.co.nz).

Cougar Line, Beachcomber Cruises and Picton Water Taxis offer transfers from Picton to the start of the walk at Ship Cove and pick up from the trail end at Anakiwa back to Picton, from £40 one-way. They also pick up and drop off at intermediate points.

Wilderness Guides and Marlborough Sounds Adventure Co have three-night packages including boat transfers, room-only hotel accommodation, packed lunches and luggage transfers from £512pp (wildernessguidesnz.com; marlboroughsounds.co.nz).

Where to stay

Jasmine Court Motel, a five-minute walk from Picton's harbour, has large, modern rooms with patios or balconies (room-only doubles from £78; jasminecourt.co.nz).

The main hotels on the route are Furneaux Lodge (room-only doubles from £242; furneauxlodge.co.nz), Punga Cove (room-only doubles from £170; pungacove.co.nz) and Portage Resort (room-only doubles from £145; portageresort.co.nz), all offering meals and packed lunches.

Department of Conservation (DOC) basic campsites have running water and loos, some have cooking shelters (pitches from £5pp a night; doc.govt.nz). Check qctrack.co.nz for other campsites, guesthouses and cabins. Not all are close to the track.

Need to know

- Walking season is usually October to April, with November to February the most popular months.
- Take all rubbish with you, including food remains; there are no litter bins.
- Long-drop loos are placed at reasonable distances on the track.
- No barbecues or open fires.
- Part of the route crosses private land so Queen Charlotte Track Land Cooperative passes must be carried (£9 a day, included in package bookings; qctlc.com).

Helen Pickles

Best of Travel

Whether you'd like to escape to the other side of the world, or venture somewhere closer to home, these travel ideas and tips are sure to fire up the imagination.

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Offering the privacy of an elegant private residence with the amenities and service of a world-class boutique hotel, Villa Abrazos is an ideal base from which to discover Ambergris Caye and the natural beauty of Belize.

ABRAZOS

Discover more at *villaabrazos.com*

Alpine hospitality and outdoor adventure in the Valais

Set in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, the five-star Walliserhof Grand-Hotel & Spa offers a welcoming mountain retreat combining outdoor activity with refined hospitality. Famous for hosting Wham! during the filming of Last Christmas, the hotel provides a guided activity programme to help guests discover the surrounding alpine landscape.

To balance an active day outdoors, the hotel features a 2,100 sq m wellness area with an indoor pool, a wide selection of spa treatments and curated sauna sessions. Dining across three restaurants caters to varied tastes with carefully prepared cuisine.

Long regarded as an appealing destination for both sports enthusiasts and those seeking quiet restoration in nature, Saas-Fee delivers an ideal setting for a tranquil holiday.

WALLISERHOF

Plan your mountain stay at *walliserhof-saasfee.ch/en-us*

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For more information on products and usage follow us at The Laundry Hub - Instagram: *the.laundry.hub* and TikTok: *@thelaundryhub*

Discover Canada's most celebrated wine region

Discover one of the few places in Canada where nature has shaped the story of more than 40 exceptional wineries. Nestled between the shores of Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada is distinguished by a unique microclimate that combines cool lake breezes, moderate temperatures, and mineral-rich soils. These ideal growing conditions produce grapes with remarkable depth, balance, and complexity, resulting in wines that are celebrated across Canada and around the world.

Wine country offers something special in every season. Spring and summer invite visitors to sip crisp Chardonnays, vibrant Sauvignon Blancs, and aromatic Rieslings while overlooking lush vineyard landscapes. Autumn brings the excitement of harvest, when wineries come alive with activity and robust reds and elegant sparkling wines take centre stage. In winter, Niagara-on-the-Lake becomes the home of the world-famous Icewine, a luxurious dessert wine made from naturally frozen grapes and renowned for its rich sweetness, vibrant acidity, and unforgettable flavour.

There are countless ways to experience Niagara-on-the-Lake's wine country. Join a guided wine tour, explore behind the scenes with a cellar experience, indulge in thoughtfully curated food and wine pairings, or simply relax on a vineyard patio with a tasting flight in hand. Each winery offers its own distinctive atmosphere, winemaking philosophy, and signature wines. Start with one that catches your eye, follow your curiosity, and discover why Niagara-on-the-Lake has become one of Canada's most celebrated wine destinations.

Plan your visit and explore the region's wineries at *niagaraonthelake.com*

Tourism NIAGARA·ON·THE·LAKE

A refined boutique retreat in the heart of Mostar

Luxury travel is evolving, with discerning visitors increasingly seeking destinations defined by atmosphere, authenticity and thoughtful design. This philosophy shapes Hotel Bulevar, the newest addition to the Emporia Collection and a sophisticated urban retreat situated in the historic centre of Mostar.

Located two minutes from the Unesco-listed Old Bridge, the intimate 18-room boutique hotel provides a city counterpart to the Emporia Wine & Dine Hotel. While its sister property is set amidst vineyards and open countryside, Hotel Bulevar reflects the culture and architecture of one of Europe's most historic settings.

Designed around the principle of understated restraint, the hotel emphasises craftsmanship, proportion and privacy. Contemporary interiors and intuitive service create a calm environment for guests exploring the city.

A defining feature is the panoramic rooftop spa lounge, which includes wellness facilities, an enclosed swimming pool and a 360-degree terrace overlooking the skyline and surrounding mountains. In the evening, the venue serves contemporary cuisine paired with wines recognised at the Decanter World Wine Awards.

Across its properties, the Emporia Collection offers hospitality that integrates architecture, gastronomy and local wine, celebrating the distinct character of the Western Balkans. Hotel Bulevar represents the next chapter for the group, offering contemporary comfort rooted in authentic local experiences and discreet service.

To learn more about the hotel or to book a stay, visit *emporia.ba*

HOTEL BULEVAR MOSTAR

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Explore southern Spain's finest medieval fortress

Almodóvar Castle, located in Andalusia, southern Spain, just a few kilometres from the city of Córdoba, is one of the country's best-preserved medieval fortresses. Built on the remains of an ancient Roman settlement and later developed during the Andalusian period, it was subsequently expanded by the Christian kingdoms. Since 1629, the castle has belonged to the Marquisate of La Motilla, whose family has carefully preserved this remarkable historical landmark. Its towers, walls and breathtaking views over the Guadalquivir Valley allow visitors to discover more than 2,000 years of history. The castle has also gained international recognition as a filming location for major productions, including Game of Thrones, where it portrayed the Kingdom of Highgarden. Combining history, architecture, nature and culture, Almodóvar Castle offers a unique experience at one of southern Spain's most iconic heritage sites.

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Located on historic Hafnarstræti in the heart of Akureyri, Skáld Akureyri, Curio Collection by Hilton, offers a distinctive base for exploring North Iceland. Inspired by contemporary Icelandic literature, the hotel combines warm Nordic design, thoughtful hospitality, and two rooftop terraces overlooking the fjord. It serves as an ideal gateway for whale watching, volcanic landscapes, and the northern lights.

One reader will win a two-night stay for two people in a double or twin guest room, including daily breakfast, room taxes, and service charges. The prize is valid for travel between 1 October 2026 and 31 May 2027, and must be booked by 28 February 2027.

For more information visit *bohemianhotels.is*

To enter visit *thebestofliving.com/win/skald_Aug26/*

Skáld AKUREYRI | CURIO COLLECTION by Hilton

An unspoilt Mediterranean escape

For travellers seeking a traditional Mediterranean getaway away from the crowds, North Cyprus remains a compelling choice. Characterised by tranquil bays, secluded coves and an average of 340 days of sunshine each year, the region provides an ideal destination for spring escapes and winter breaks alike.

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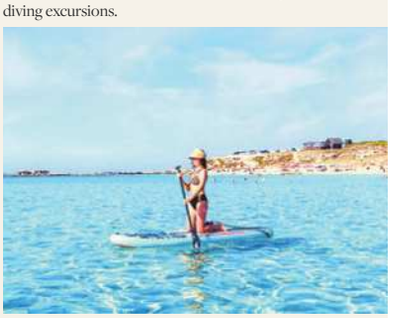
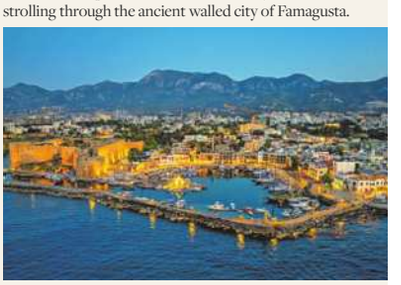
Activity seekers are well catered for, with parasailing, kayaking and paddleboarding available along the coast, alongside water park attractions suitable for younger children. Beneath the surface, clear and warm coastal waters create ideal conditions for scuba diving. Divers can explore rich marine environments, natural rock formations and underwater wreck sites via guided diving excursions.



The coastline features extensive sandy stretches that serve as natural nesting sites for protected loggerhead and green sea turtles. Visitors can select from established beach clubs in Kyrenia, the expansive sands of Famagusta, or the protected landscape of the Karpaz peninsula.

Day trips aboard traditional wooden sailing vessels, known as gulets, offer coastal cruises past secluded bays against a backdrop of mountain scenery. Ashore, evening highlights include dining along Kyrenia's historic horseshoe-shaped harbour, overlooked by its castle, or strolling through the ancient walled city of Famagusta.



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Alpine terrain and fine dining in Austria's largest ski area

At the heart of Ski Arlberg, Austria's largest connected ski domain, Lech Zürs offers 300km of marked pistes and ski runs alongside extensive off-piste routes. A connected lift network allows seamless travel between neighbouring villages, while high-altitude slopes ensure reliable snow conditions from December through to mid-April.

Accommodating every level, from wide pistes for beginners to steep descents for experienced skiers, many slope-side hotels provide convenient ski-in, ski-out access. Beyond the pistes, visitors can enjoy cross-country trails, winter walking routes, horse-drawn sleigh rides and a calm village atmosphere.

Complementing the sports facilities, Lech Zürs boasts a distinguished culinary landscape, featuring Michelin-starred restaurants, acclaimed hotels and high-altitude dining options serving traditional Alpine dishes alongside contemporary global cuisine. Here, world-class skiing and exceptional gastronomy are given equal priority.

Plan your winter visit at *lechzuers.com/en*

Lech Zürs ARLBERG

Enjoy a Fantastic family day out this summer

Bring your family for the most fantastic summer of fun at the Roald Dahl Museum in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, just a short hop by train from London Marylebone. Enjoy a day in this award-winning Museum. Explore interactive galleries that feature Roald Dahl's original Writing Hut, play courtyard games with a Roald Dahl twist and enjoy waterplay and ice creams under the trees.

Get even more out of your visit with a gigantus selection of workshops from clay sculptures to LEGO® animals, all inspired by Fantastic Mr Fox. The highlight of the summer is a poetry workshop with poet Will Burns which takes place in the woods that inspired the stories. Look out for this on 27 August. Don't miss exceptional coffee, award-winning teas and locally-sourced light bites and treats from the Filling-Station while you're here.

Find out more at *roalddahlmuseum.org*

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JULY 2027

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Thu 29 **Barcelona, Spain**
Vibrant and earthy, commercial and cultural, this city of two million residents is the capital of Spain's autonomous region of Catalonia. Stroll along the wide, tree-lined promenades of Las Ramblas and marvel at the spires of Gaudí's Basilica La Sagrada Familia

Fri 30 **Toulon/Provence (from La Seyne), France**

AUGUST 2027

Sun 1 **Cartagena, Spain**
Cartagena, a historic port city on Spain's southeastern coast, is a treasure trove of ancient and modern wonders. Known for its rich Roman heritage, Cartagena boasts stunning archaeological sites, including a well-preserved Roman theatre and ancient city walls. Its strategic location has made it a vital naval hub for centuries, reflected in its impressive military fortifications and museums

Mon 2 ★ *Chance to witness the Solar Eclipse on board* ★

Tue 3 **Seville (from Cádiz), Spain**

Wed 4 **Lisbon, Portugal**
This coastal city effortlessly marries its rich history with a contemporary cosmopolitan vibe. Cobblestone streets wind through historic neighbourhoods, revealing captivating architecture, from Moorish-influenced Alfama to the elegant Belém district

Sat 7 **Arrive in Southampton**

Dates not mentioned will be spent relaxing at sea

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With its glorious beaches, the Belgian riviera is due a revival

This coast has an easy tram line plus great places to stay and eat, says Ceci Browning

JORG GREUEL/GETTY IMAGES

A beach near Ostend

When I told friends I was heading off on holiday to the Belgian coast they were surprised. "Belgium has a coast?" Even the most geographically deft among them admitted to associating the small European nation with city breaks rather than seaside getaways. Not one had set foot on the 40-mile stretch of blond beach between its western French border and its eastern Dutch one. "Is it even nice?" one pal asked.

The answer to that question is yes. Very. In fact, the Belgian riviera was a top tourist destination for the British for more than 100 years. At the mid-point of the 19th century, after the establishment of capital-to-coast railway lines in England and Belgium, the Belgian government set up a daily steamship service to shuttle eager tourists back and forth across the North Sea. Except for brief interludes during the two world wars, this Belgian-British holidaying boomed throughout the 20th century. It was only after the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 and the discontinuation of the ferry service that we Brits forgot Belgium has a coast at all. These days almost 85 per cent of its visitors are Belgian.

By way of reminder, I am going with a friend for a long weekend, taking the Eurostar from London to Brussels then a quiet double-decker train direct to Ostend, Belgium's largest coastal city, through flat, freshly harvested fields and past small farms populated by miniature horses and cows. When we step down onto the platform early in the afternoon we're greeted by the squawking of seagulls and the wet, salty scent of the sea. The sun is out and the temperature hovers around 25C. The place feels nostalgic and familiar, like a holiday on home shores.

We're staying at the Ostendian, a quirky, artistical hotel that opened last spring (B&B doubles from £130; ostendian.com). From here it is a short walk through the centre of town to the beach, allowing for a stop off at Ice Ice Amy for a scoop of eclair-flavoured ice cream in a biscuity cone (from £3; iceiceamy.be).

Later we visit the former home of James Ensor, the eccentric Flemish artist most famous for his macabre modernist paintings of masked figures (£11; ensorhuis.be). The details of his life and work are interesting, but especially evocative are the museum's old photographs of the town in its former glory. Thanks to its palatial hotels (which have been almost entirely demolished) and magnificent casino (sadly destroyed during the Second World War) Ostend was known in the 1920s as La Reine des Plages — Queen of the Beaches.

After a delicious dinner at Cafe Rubens (mains from £15; hotelrubens.be), an old-fashioned, tavern-like brasserie with crooning background music and candles in red glass jars, we hit one of the beaches and witness one of the most orange, impressive sunsets I've seen. Weaving our way back to the hotel, we go through the Royal Galleries, a neoclassical arcade commissioned by King Leopold II at the beginning of the 20th century. When it eventually gets dark, the Mercator, a grand three-masted former naval ship and now museum docked in the town's harbour, lights up the night.

The next day we make the most of the regular and extremely user-friendly tram service, known as the Kusttram, which runs along the coast between Knokke and De Panne. First stop is De Haan, a quaint town strict planning regulations (beginning in 1889) have saved from high-rise apartment blocks. The result is a Playmobil-style community with neat green spaces, winding streets, minimal traffic and clusters of Anglo-Norman houses topped with red-tiled triangular roofs. In the distance little sailing yachts dart back and forth. Children dash along the sand, bright novelty kites trailing behind them.

Joris Surmont, a retired Belgian naval officer who has spent his whole life on (and off) this slice of the Belgian coast, gives us a thoughtfully planned tour, starting with the Grand Hotel Belle Vue, opened in 1912 to cater to wealthy Englishmen with a penchant for gambling, and ending near Villa Savoyarde, where Albert Einstein stayed for six months after fleeing Nazi Germany. He points out the garden where the physicist liked to lunch, the spot marked with a commemorative bench. We cool off afterwards with a leisurely beach picnic and a dip in the surprisingly warm water, wading in through the gentle white wash.

Need to know

Ceci Browning was a guest of Visit Flanders (visitflanders.com) and Westtoer (westtoer.be)

Another 20-minute tram ride takes us up to Blankenberge, which with its crowds and bustle reminds me of Blackpool or Weston-super-Mare. This is the spot at which to fuel up on huge rings of calamari at the brightly decorated café Kantine (snacks from £7; @kantineblankenberge on Instagram). Back in peaceful Ostend we while away the evening at De Grote Post, a vast, modernist building that was once the city's post office but was relaunched as a cultural centre in 2012 (degrotepost.be). Sadly the glamorous rooftop bar is fully booked, but we spend a quarter of an hour poking round the old corridors then have the tastiest dinner of the trip (Mexican tacos and croque monsieur) at CultuurCafé, the sleek in-house restaurant (mains from £17; cultuurcafedegrotepost.be).

The next day we take the tram west to Nieuwpoort, racing common terns flying low over the sea foam. Scaly stone groynes, green with algae, look like lurking crocodiles, and on the horizon rainbow-coloured kitesurfing sails drift like butterflies. Nieuwpoort is smaller than Ostend (the population is roughly 11,000 compared with Ostend's 73,000), but it has the largest marina in northern Europe. Its new town is closest to the front and has a chic shopping street, while the medieval old town is by the Yser river. There, at the Westfront museum, we learn that this relatively anonymous town was a crucial strategic point in the First World War.

Belgian troops stationed here used locks and sluice gates to deliberately flood the area with seawater, preventing the German forces from pushing on to Paris. On a lighter note, we end the evening with freshly made waffles on the sand dunes at Zeedijk 47.

Our last day begins with breakfast at the recently renovated Hotel Cosmopolite before we return to Ostend for our train home (B&B doubles from £201; hotelcosmopolite.be). It's a wrench to leave knowing there is much more to explore (including a pentagon-shaped fortress built by Napoleon between 1811 and 1814), but we make the most of the morning by sipping black coffee at the charming Café du Parc on the corner of Marie-Joséplein square (hoteldupparc.be). Then we fill our rucksacks with bounty from the independent chocolatier Olivier Willems, where the handsome-looking truffles are handmade on site. It is a test not to scoff them all before I get home (olivierwillems.be).

Back at the Ostend marina, around the corner from the station, we tuck into a light lunch of *visreepjes* (fish sticks) and *garnaalkroketten* (shrimp croquettes) outside Mac Mer, a food stand built into a shipping container (snacks from £5; Van Iseghemlaan 56). Sitting in the bright sunshine, looking out at the bobbing vessels, we reflect that since arriving we've heard only French or Flemish, Belgium's two national languages. Maybe there's a benefit to the Dover-Ostend ferry no longer running. The trip has felt like a complete escape. Go before the Belgian riviera has a British revival.

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Tue 15 **Tallinn, Estonia** (depart early pm)

Wed 16 **Riga, Latvia**

Thu 17 **Visby, Sweden** (depart early pm)

Fri 18 **Berlin (from Warnemünde), Germany**

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Tue 22 **Arrive in Southampton**

Dates not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea

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ALLARD SCHAGER/GETTY IMAGES

A Napa Valley vineyard

Wine tasting, hiking and a mud bath in Napa Valley

Gorgeous mountain scenery, great food, a chic new hotel among the vineyards and big wines await in California's famous region, Nina Caplan discovers

It's hardly a secret that Napa Valley, world famous for wine, is a valley — the clue is in the name. So I felt a little silly to be as awestruck as I was by the jagged mountains rising beyond the car window during the hour-long trip from San Francisco to St Helena. That geography is the secret to the region's success, although no visitor smitten with the wines, food and relaxed atmosphere would think one was required.

On my first evening, still dizzy with jet lag, I ate dinner at Cook St Helena, where waiting locals hung out near the door, wine glasses in hands, chatting amiably (mains from £21.75; cooksthelena.com). Behind a marble bar with arty pendant lights and stools for lone diners, a friendly barman was mixing drinks. The pasta was homemade, the wines Italian and American and terrific.

The owner, Jude Wilmoth, is a lifelong resident — as a young man he used to bring dates here, to what was then a café — and his food is a canny blend of local bounty and Italian knowhow. I tried a delicious tangle of spaghetti strewn across a profusion of clams and wild shrimp and admired the outfits on fellow diners — everything from preppy jeans and sweaters to a trilby with a feather in the brim.

Even before reaching my emerald-green standalone suite at the newest outpost of the chic California mini-chain Le Petit Pali on the edge of town, I could feel my shoulders descending and my mind slowing its frantic whirl (B&B doubles from £390; lepetitpali.com).

The valley is five miles long with the Mayacamas Mountains to the west and the Vaca Mountains to the east: the former are tectonic, thrown up by earthquakes, but the latter are volcanic. Those ranges funnel cool air up from the Pacific Ocean and that seaborne fog and the varied soils are Eden for vines, which is one reason this patch of California is the world's most visited wine region. But those ancient volcanoes are also responsible for the thermal springs clustered around Calistoga, the most rustic and northern of the small towns strung along the valley floor.

The preservation movement, spearheaded by the Land Trust of Napa County (LTNC), has been working to protect this land for 50 years. Because as well as the vast expanses of vines, there are forests, creeks and wildflower meadows. Long before biodiversity became a watchword, the LTNC made sure that the variety within this extraordinary landscape was protected.

Proximity to a great city like San Francisco made the fledgling Napa wine industry successful and a notorious tasting known as the Judgement of Paris (50 years ago this year) brought global fame. The tasting was blind, the judges were French experts and, to their horror, the winners were Californian. Wineries like Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Chateau Montelena, both among the winners, still have paraphernalia on display in their tasting rooms celebrating an event that put them on the map.

On a sunny day I swam in Le Petit Pali's sparkling (and heated) outdoor pool, its green-and-white edging matched to the surrounding loungers, lolled in the adjacent Jacuzzi, then dithered between a breakfast burrito and a rolled omelette while swerving the house martini or open bottle of sparkling wine. The view of the vines around the property (belonging to the Freemark Abbey Winery, another Judgement of Paris winner), were all the percentage proof I needed just then. Particularly as I prepared to spend the morning hiking part of the History Trail in Bothe State Park (vehicle fee £7; napaoutdoors.org). Slender trunks of oaks, firs and even redwoods lined the route, reaching tall towards the azure sky; acid-green ferns coated their roots. The trees parted to reveal Bale Grist Mill, a gargantuan wooden building with the biggest mill wheel I've ever seen, built in 1846 and recently restored. Not only does it still work, but on weekends you can buy fresh-milled grain.

Where to eat and where to taste the valley's wines

But I didn't need grain. In St Helena, I also ate at the Charter Oak, a rustic restaurant with its own farm, where they cook everything from mushrooms to vast slabs of Angus ribeye steak on the open grill and make their own bread from a 33-year-old starter (mains from £21; thecharteroak.com). At Bouchon Bakery in Yountville, owned by Thomas Keller of the nearby three-Michelin-starred French Laundry, were neat rows of homemade macarons in every possible pastel shade (thomaskeller.com).

At Charlie's back in St Helena I was obliged to choose between French toast sticks with black truffle maple syrup and pretzel-wrapped kielbasa, the Polish sausage, with sweet hot mustard (mains from £20; charliesnv.com). I went savoury: pillowy salted dough and local meat, in American portions that put paid to any thought of dessert. When I got back to my suite at Le Petit Pali, staff tapped on my door bearing homemade cookies.

And I wasn't washing down all this fabulous food with water. Napa Valley is famous for big, punchy red wines (at big, punchy prices) made from cabernet sauvignon, and forceful, creamy chardonnays, but wine tastes are changing and Americans don't ignore the market. Even some of the grandest cabernets like Stag's Leap (tastings from £71; stagsleap.com) or Linda Falls from Heitz (tastings from £56; heitzcellar.com) were elegant, fresh and moreish.

The drive up to Cade Estate Winery on Howell Mountain was an event in itself, the landscape undulating in tones of green towards a distant puff of white that looked like a snowscape but was actually low cloud, or the famous fog (tastings £75; cadewinery.com).

But it wasn't nonstop consumption. During an overnight in Calistoga, I also took advantage of that volcanic gift: naturally hot, mineral-infused water. I was now staying at Okaeri, an elegant Japanese-inspired hotel with a different spa feature in every room (mine was a wooden Japanese tub) and a dining room built over the former swimming pool, allowing for an indoor carp pond (B&B doubles from £225; okaericalistoga.com).

Fifteen minutes' stroll through town took me to Dr Wilkinson's Backyard Resort and Mineral Springs for the hour-long Mudslinger treatment: a mud bath unlike anything I've ever experienced (£188; drwilkinson.com). The changing rooms were a little primitive, but that was nothing compared to the treatment room: a tiled cubicle with hose, spade and cement oblong tub filled with mud. Actual gloop, a blend of volcanic ash, Canadian peat and water from the hot springs thick enough to plant a flag in.

Getting into it was a slow process, but the gloop was very warm, surprisingly comfortable — and once ensconced for a 15-minute soak, it was absolutely impossible to check my phone which, notwithstanding the mud's exfoliating, detoxifying and muscle-relaxing properties, may have been the most beneficial aspect of the treatment.

A more conventional massage in the standalone spa at Meadowood (from £250; meadowood.com) made a nice contrast. This is a leafy estate hotel with extensive grounds, plus a relaxation area that features a plunge pool and steam room within earshot of the estate's many birds.

And yet I was less than ten minutes' drive from St Helena. Fine dining and forest walking, homestyle meals and superior wine lists, mountains and mud baths. Fog, for that matter, and sunshine. No wonder the grapes like it here.

Need to know

Nina Caplan was a guest of Visit Napa Valley (visitnapavalley.com). Fly to San Francisco

ALAMY

Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, Maldives. Below: Theth National Park, Albania

Late deals

Try Cornwall, Cyprus or the Maldives

UK

A compact Cornish cottage

Wobbly wifi and a 300m walk from the car park will make the Sally Port a challenging option for some. But anyone with a sense of adventure and a love of the sea should look no further. This two-bedroom cottage teeters at the end of a National Trust-protected headland near St Mawes, beneath the Saint Anthony Lighthouse, so you're going to feel as though you're sleeping in the fo'c'sle of a ship. Find it in Cornish Hideaways' special offers section. From August 24 seven nights' self-catering for four costs £1,969 — a 17 per cent saving (cornwallhideaways.co.uk).

Escape to the Cotswolds

The style is relaxed, the decor eclectic and quietly posh and there are walks nearby along the Cotswold Scarp, gazing towards Gloucester. So if your August has gone slack with everyone away and life seemingly on hold, the Painswick hotel could be the perfect bolthole. Especially with its Stay a While deal offering three nights' accommodation for the price of two. Farm shops, bike rides and beech woods beckon between long terrace lunches and the odd cocktail back at base. B&B doubles start at £309pp for three nights in August (thepainswick.co.uk).

Stylish self-catering in the Lakes

Two of the cottages at Meadow Brow above Grasmere are named after a local landmark, the Lion and the Lamb crag, which you can see on the far side of the valley. This one is the Lamb, and it's just as cosy as its name suggests. Decked out in snug Scandi style, it's a wood-panelled, bentwood-chair place with acres of space outside in which to run around and the ever popular Bistro at the Yan nearby. At the time of writing it's available from August 21 with a 19 per cent discount. Seven nights' self-catering for four costs £1,322 (holidaycottages.co.uk).

EUROPE

Cruise the Greek islands in luxury

September may sit in the Mediterranean's sweet spot for luxury cruises, when thinning crowds and less fiery temperatures make excursions appetising again after high summer. But there are still late-booking discounts to be found, such as this 36 per cent price cut on Explora's Journey Through Ionian Shores and Cycladic Beauty. The circular route from Athens onboard the sleek, all-suite Explora II includes stops in Bari, Lefkada and Mykonos. And if that doesn't suit, several more itineraries feature in the same Invitation to Celebrate sale. Seven nights' all-inclusive from September 7 starts at £3,850pp (explorajourneys.com). Fly to Athens.

Alpine delights in Austria

Kitzbühel is hard to beat if you're looking for a multifaceted Austrian holiday, with decent deals if you book last minute. They include this one from the Alpine specialist Inghams, which knocks £270 off a week at the Q! Hotel Maria Theresia from August 15 and starts at £1,210pp half-board, including flights. Kitzbühel is home to four golf courses and a tennis club as well as ten swimming lakes, 153 cycling and mountain bike trails and more than 600 miles of waymarked footpaths. Plus a delicious array of cakes at the Franz Josef café on Jochberger Strasse when you're done.

Bustling beach hotel in Cyprus

If all you want is to fly and flop, the Mediterranean Beach Hotel is waiting just east of Limassol with a multilevel outdoor swimming pool, nine bars and restaurants, and a Blue Flag beach just beyond its leafy garden. It can organise scuba-diving sessions for guests through the local Padi-accredited Dive-In centre, which is worth noting if the 25 per cent saving you've made on your holiday with Tui is burning a hole in your pocket. Several late-summer dates are discounted. From August 28, seven nights' B&B is down to £972pp, including flights (tui.co.uk).

Hiking in the Balkans

The Via Dinarica trail is the inspiration for this guided 11-day Hiking the Balkans tour from Intrepid. You won't be walking its full length; instead you'll cherry-pick some of its most scenic sections in Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Albania as it winds through the Dinaric Alps. En route there'll be time to experience Balkan life over lunch in the remote Bosnian village of Lukomir, for example, and in the resurgent city of Sarajevo. Three dates are discounted right now, including the September 20 departure, when ten nights' B&B starts at £1,912 — a 20 per cent saving (intrepidtravel.com). Fly into Split and out of Tirana.

LONG HAUL

An introduction to Mexico

The adventure travel specialist Explore is cutting up to 20 per cent off tours to South, Central and North America. They include its Contrasts of Mexico tour, which dips into Belize and Guatemala as it explores the Aztec, Zapotec and Maya heartlands. Expect colourful markets, spectacular landscapes and colonial architecture, but the real focus is on the civilisations that raised such monuments as the Teotihuacan pyramids and created the sculptures of Palenque. From November 21, 14 nights' B&B is down £620 to £2,460pp (explore.co.uk). Fly into Mexico City and out of Belize City.

The Maldives for families at half-term

There's no doubt a February half-term holiday at Ozen Reserve Bolifushi in the Maldives is a big-ticket family trip. But at least this deal from Best at Travel shaves 15 per cent off the price — and allows two children to stay and eat for free. From February 13 seven nights' all-inclusive starts at £4,066pp, including flights, with a 60-minute spa treatment per adult (bestattravel.co.uk). Then it's time for some tropical island bliss, snorkelling along the house reef, kayaking and sailing on the lagoon and, when the little 'uns are in their kids' club, sneaking back to the spa.

Tented safari camp in the Serengeti

New this year, Wild Wakati Camp in Tanzania offers a ground-level experience of the Serengeti Plains, with ten safari tents for guests and a team of Maasai warriors to escort you to dinner. That doesn't mean you'll be roughing it, though, with emperor beds, flush toilets and double sinks in every tent — plus, of course, the luxury of having one of the world's greatest wildlife spectacles unfolding right in front of you. Book the launch offer on 00 255 682 173 670 and you'll get every third night of your stay free. Six nights' full board, including game drives, starts at £1,524pp (enduatacamps.com). Fly to Kilimanjaro International Airport.

Two kinds of Balinese luxury

What makes this twin-centre deal from Turquoise Holidays so interesting is that it's valid for trips between September 7 and October 11 — at the back end of Bali's dry season, just as the crowds are thinning. It delivers two kinds of luxury, starting with three nights at Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton resort amid rainforest and rice paddies, with a free upgrade to a Mandapa suite on a complimentary half-board basis. Then you'll get 25 per cent off seven nights' B&B in a Studio Suite at the seafront Legian Seminyak. The price starts at £4,795pp, including flights (turquoiseholidays.co.uk).

Sean Newsom

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What customers said about their recent Thailand holiday

Amazing! From the suggested travel plan, quick and detailed responses to the ultimate family holiday that ticked all our boxes. The destinations, hotel choices, transfers and experiences were all 5 star. Hassle free, seamless transfers made the whole experience stress free. I would highly recommend DialAFlight.

Hayley Morgan-Roe | Posted 19 Jul | Stayed at **Santhiya Koh Phangan**

Robbie is a diamond. I have recommended him to all my friends. Two of them have since used your great company.

Jonathan Jones | Posted 9 Jul | Stayed at **Park Plaza Bangkok**

Great communication and a pleasure to deal with.

Mark Bronka | Posted 5 Jul | Stayed at **SAii Koh Samui Villas**

Everything was perfect, thank you!

Nancy Rowe | Posted 29 Jun | Stayed at **AMANOR Hotel Chiang Mai**

Fabulous trip - all went to plan!

Alex Pemberton | Posted 2 Jun | Stayed at **Anantara Hoi An Resort**

Brilliant holiday - everything went like clockwork.

David Cummings | Posted 29 May | Stayed at **Centara Kata Resort Phuket**

Owen was fantastic, everything went so smoothly. We will definitely be using DialAFlight again for the excellent service.

Louise Ransford | Posted 28 May | Stayed at **Santiburi Koh Samui**

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Dawn to dusk
The sun sets over Victoria Harbour; dim sum dining; antiques shopping in Sheung Wan

Beyond and beneath the city's gleaming skyscrapers, there's lots to be discovered. The dried seafood and antique shops of Sheung Wan offer a dive into traditional Chinese culture; Tsim Sha Tsui, across the water on Kowloon, brings atmospheric nightlife; and Sham Shui Po has some of the best street food and wonderful fabric markets. And no one should miss a trip up to the Peak – the highest point in Hong Kong, it's accessible by tram and offers spectacular views across the skyline.

Hong Kong is extraordinary at any time of year, but it shines especially brightly in September during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The city comes alive with lively processions and carnivals, celebrating the year's fullest and brightest moon. Parks are illuminated with colourful lanterns, and locals and visitors gather to picnic, gaze at the moon and enjoy traditional mooncakes. A highlight is always the spectacular Tang Hai Fire Dragon Dance, featuring a 67m-long flaming dragon, paraded through the neighbourhood by more than 300 performers.

In late October, the Hong Kong Wine & Dine festival showcases the best of a celebrated food scene, bringing together international chefs, gastronomical experiences, waterfront dining and live events along Victoria Harbour.

Taste Hong Kong further celebrates the rich culinary heritage and cutting edge contemporary dining scene, with 250 restaurant recommendations by 50 leading chefs.

A day in Hong Kong is unlike anywhere else. Discover contemporary art at Tai Kwun, a former colonial police station in Central; kayak through the sheltered bays of Sai Kung; or sip sunset cocktails at one of the city's award-winning rooftop bars, six of which feature among a list of Asia's 50 Best Bars.

Food, of course, is at the heart of every experience here. From the many traditional dim sum halls and Michelin-starred restaurants to lively *dai pai dongs* (open-air food stalls), visitors can expect a vibrant blend of flavours, influences and cultures – much like Hong Kong itself.

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The Times hotel guide Corsham House Wiltshire

Rooms and suites 8/10
Food and drink 9/10
Where is it? 9/10
Overall score 9/10

A double bedroom

DAVE WATTS

The Georgian façade

There's no stopping the Beckford Group. Corsham House is the West Country company's third boutique opening of the year in the region, following pub with rooms the Bradley Hare Inn and the Teffont House Hotel. It is on the high street of Corsham, a Cotswolds town ten miles from Bath. Once a bank branch, Corsham House is a handsome grade II listed Georgian building that now has a modern British brasserie with a bottle shop and cosy rooms.

Rooms and suites

There are 11 bedrooms. Two sit under the eaves up a curved staircase, and the other nine are on the first floor. All have the Soho-House-cum-Laura-Ashley hallmarks of Beckford's other spots. Room six, formerly the manager's office, has a curvy velvet headboard, floral curtains and traditional taps that make it feel as though you've popped to a rich auntie's house from a period novel. Bonus points for the full-sized Bramley toiletries and bistro curtains that allow for nosing onto the high street.

Each of the bathrooms is different. Room seven has a slipper bath and a connecting door to room six, great for families. Even the largest rooms are bijou, so don't expect a wardrobe (there are pegs with hangers), and there's no fridge, but mini milk bottles are delivered daily.

Food and drink

The Beckford Group is renowned for its food and wine, and at Corsham House dinner is the main event. The place has been elegantly styled with burgundy banquettes and a striking tin ceiling in the main brasserie.

The menu has something for meat-eaters, fish fans and veggies. Starters include a pile of Cornish white crab or chicken parfait on a homemade crumpet. Mains are larger, such as halibut, rump steak and pork belly. Puddings, such as an elderflower tart, have equal flair. Cocktails include classic negronis and old fashioneds alongside West Country takes such as Cornish Wet martinis with gin from Falmouth's Loveday Distillery.

Laura Jackson was a guest of Corsham House, which has B&B doubles from £100; mains from £15 (corshamhouse.com)

The wine list is a two-pager, with English sparklings from Sussex and a European focus on reds and whites (bottles from £32). Breakfast is à la carte and charged separately, with pastries from £5 and sophisticated dishes like chalk stream trout royale. Dogs are welcome in the brasserie but not the rooms.

What else is there?

The restaurant lavatories are an experience — they are in what was Lloyds Bank's enormous walk-in safe.

Where is it?

Corsham House is a 40-minute drive from Bristol and 30 minutes from Bath.
Laura Jackson

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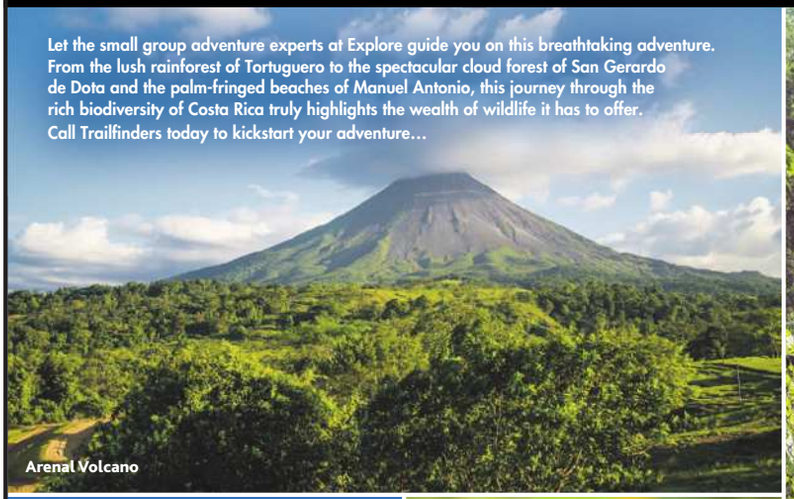
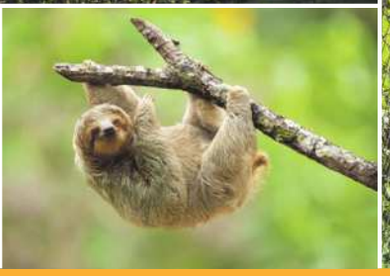


Arenal Volcano



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Julia Brookes
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The Arenal volcano, Costa Rica. Below: Corfu, Greece

Q I'd like to visit Costa Rica early next year and am looking for a small-group tour with guides and a stay in independently owned lodges rather than swanky hotels. Ideally, I'd get off the beaten track, but my main aim is to see some outstanding wildlife, go on rainforest hikes and get a feel for the country. My budget is under £3,000, excluding flights. Can you recommend a specialist tour operator?
Carla Rowe

A The Latin America specialist Llama Travel has a 13-night Best of Costa Rica and Quetzal extension tour that's perfect for wildlife-maxxing and avoiding the crowds. After a quick stop in the capital, San José, it heads to the canals of Tortuguero national park on the Caribbean coast, staying at either Manatus Lodge or Aninga Lodge, where howler monkeys could be your dawn wake-up call. Arenal, one of the country's top destinations, is unmissable for its cone-shaped volcano and you'd stay in the secluded Lomas del Volcan, where there are wildlife walks straight from your lodge. Other highlights include a stay at Villa Blanca hotel, surrounded by cloud forest, and San Gerardo de Dota, one of the best places to spot the resplendent quetzal among wild avocado trees. It starts at £3,178pp including flights, B&B, plus some meals and transfers (llamatravel.co.uk).

Q My partner and I are taking two recently bereaved relatives on (at their behest) a Greek island holiday. They're both relatively mobile and healthy for their ages (86 and 80), but don't like hills or heat (25C-plus) and will be dependent on us. We're looking for a three-bed villa with a private pool in a quiet location but within an easy walk to a small village with a bakery, tavernas and a supermarket, so they can be as independent as possible. What can you suggest?
Caroline Cotterell

A Villa Stathis on the outskirts of Vamos in Crete is a three-bedroom, century-old beauty with a vine-clad pergola beside the pool, a short walk from traditional tavernas, cafés and a bakery. A week's self-catering for four in October, when the weather shouldn't top 25C, costs £767pp including flights and car hire (gicthevillacollection.com). Another peaceful Greek rural idyll is to be found perched in northeast Corfu. Eleftheria is a three-bedroom villa with knockout views from its pool, terraces and balconies to Albania and an easy stroll to the hamlet of San Stefanos, with waterfront tavernas and markets in one direction and the blue-flag beach at Kerasia in the other. A week's self-catering for up to six in October, when the temperature should be a pleasant 23C, is £1,998 (vintagetravel.co.uk).

Q I'm planning a trip to Glasgow in November or December to see where my dad was born and then to Melrose in the Scottish Borders to visit Abbotsford, Sir Walter Scott's home. I'll be travelling from London by train with my dog and don't want to spend much more than £100 per night on hotels. What can you recommend?
Amanda Stone

A In Glasgow, the Sandman Signature, a 15-minute walk from the city's Central Station, would be comfortable for both of you. It provides dog beds, biscuits and bowls for £15 per pet, per night and B&B doubles start from £88 in December if you join the loyalty scheme (sandmansignature.co.uk). From Glasgow to Melrose, there are no direct trains or buses. You'll have to travel via Edinburgh to Tweedbank and take a short bus ride (or a 25-minute walk along the river). Stay at Burts Hotel, which dates from 1722, on the market square. You can eat only in the bar with your dog but it stocks more than 90 malt whiskies. B&B in a single room starts at £98; there is no pet fee (burtshotel.co.uk). It's a short walk from the hotel to Melrose Abbey, the alleged burial site of Robert the Bruce's heart, and Abbotsford is three miles away.

Q I made a reservation with Booking.com for four nights at a hotel in Ischia, Italy, but then cancelled it because I found another hotel nearer the ferry terminal and the town. I received confirmation of the cancellation, but on arrival the hotel called asking why I hadn't checked in. Despite showing proof of cancellation, I was charged £917. Booking.com then told me there was a second booking in my name under a different confirmation number, but with an incorrect email address — I'm afraid someone has managed to get into my account. Booking.com said the hotel would refund me but it has refused. How can I get my money back?
Jane Pailthorpe

A I'm sorry to say it has been impossible to get to the bottom of this. Booking.com insists you made two bookings but one had your email address spelt incorrectly so you were unable to see it. You maintain you only made one booking. Booking.com looked into whether your account had been compromised but said there was nothing to suggest this. It added that it had advocated with the hotel on your behalf and the hotel has offered a voucher worth £17.37. Your next step would be to try a charge-back with your card provider, explaining that you dispute the second booking and didn't authorise it. You may want to book directly next time.

Contact us

If you have a gripe, suggestion or question relating to your holidays, please email **traveldoctor@thetimes.co.uk**

Don't put up with this

Flight cancelled but we weren't told

My friend and I booked flights (Aegean outbound, British Airways return) to Greece through Opodo. Our outbound flight on April 18 was uneventful. But on the day of our return, Opodo notified us that its automatic check-in had failed and told us to check in online. When we did, we discovered our BA flight had been cancelled. Neither BA nor Opodo had informed us beforehand. There was no alternative that day, so we booked seats on the following morning's flight with BA and had to pay £380 for a night at the Sofitel Athens Airport because of the early departure. After returning home, BA initially handled my claim for hotel costs and compensation efficiently but eventually rejected it, saying it had notified us of the cancellation two weeks earlier. We received no email, text or phone call and Opodo confirmed it had not been notified either. My repeated calls to Opodo were very frustrating. I had to explain the situation from the beginning each time and eventually I was told nothing more could be done. Can you help?
Alexandra Elson

Your predicament was entirely Opodo's fault. BA did send you an email about the cancellation, but it was sent to the address Opodo provided, which wasn't the one you used for the booking. An Opodo spokesperson said: "A full refund has now been issued and a voucher for future travel as a gesture of goodwill. We apologise for any inconvenience caused." BA also offered a goodwill payment of £200.

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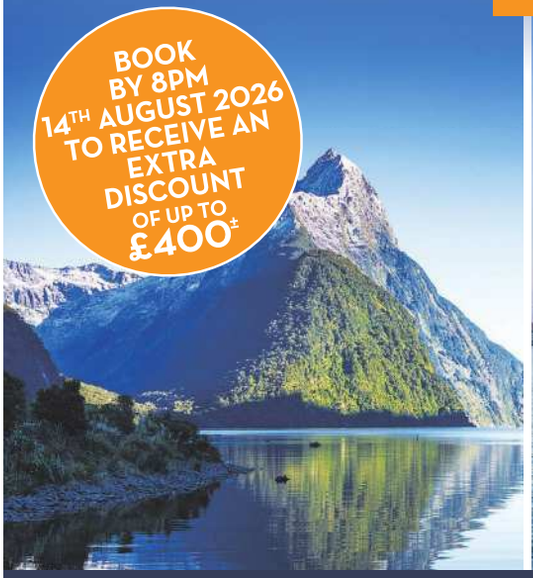

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THE TIMES

Saturday August 8 2026

saturday review

Inside Your 7-day guide to TV, radio and films

An incredible tale
Jason Arday's mawkish memoir, reviewed

Ricky Gervais
'I can't wait for people to be offended by a cartoon cat'

"One of the true greats of American music!"
- Liverpool Sounds & Music

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"Every song a classic!" - London Theatre Guide

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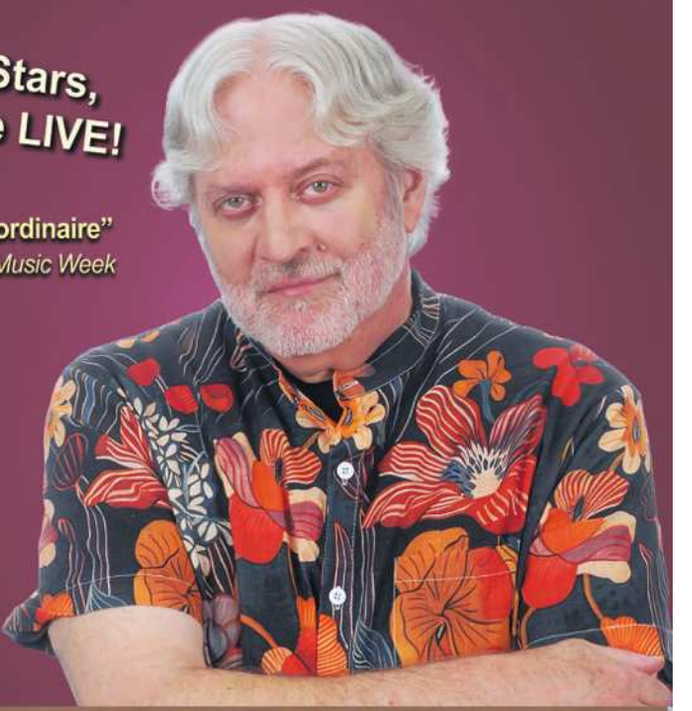

AUGUST

8 **Kinross** Green Hotel / Backstage
9 **Arbroath** Webster Theatre
13 **Glasgow** Cottiers Theatre
14 **Roberton** Village Hall
15 & 16 **Edinburgh Fringe** New Town Church
19 & 20 **Barnoldswick** Barnoldswick Music & Arts **SOLD OUT**
21 **Liverpool** Epstein Theatre
22 **Sheffield** The Greystones
23 **Hull** Wrecking Ball Music & Books
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What to do this week by our critics

My hot ticket

Clive Davis
chief theatre critic

Game of Thrones: The Mad King

There's mayhem aplenty on the stage at the moment. In London, the revival of Sarah Kane's ultra-violent psychodrama *Cleansed* continues to divide opinion. (I loathed it, other reviewers thought it a work of genius.) Meanwhile, the Royal Shakespeare Company's sold-out version of George RR Martin's blood-soaked fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* finally has its opening night today. Devotees of Westeros history will be desperate to see what the playwright Duncan Macmillan has crafted in a drama set in the years before the events depicted in the books. One of the UK's most experienced directors, Dominic Cooke, oversees a sprawling ensemble on a reconfigured, cross-shaped stage. The giant puppet horses have already been prompting gasps in the stalls.
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, to Sep 5

SEAMUS RYAN/RSC

The Mad King at Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford. Below: Glenn Close in The Summer Book

Visual art

Hull Maritime Museum

Laura Freeman

Ahoy, me hearties (as no maritime man ever said) and set sail for the Hull Maritime Museum, which reopens today after six years and a £20.4 million transformation. More than 1,300 objects will be on display, including artefacts from Shackleton's Endurance expedition to the Antarctic. For landlubbers keener on art than rigging, there's an extraordinary collection of scrimshaw — engravings and carvings typically made by whalers from the bones of whales and the tusks of walruses.

Classical

Bristol Proms

Richard Morrison

This weekend the BBC Proms descends on Bristol. Today there's a young composers' workshop, a programme of 20th-century Russian classics from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a tribute to the great jazz saxophonist John Coltrane. The line-up tomorrow begins with a "relaxed" family Prom, then a performance of Joby Talbot's outstanding choral piece *Path of Miracles*, and a concert of Gyorgy Kurtag's *Kafka-Fragments*, celebrating Kurtag's 100th birthday.
Various venues, Bristol, today and tomorrow

Dance

Under Mask

Debra Craine

As the Edinburgh Fringe kicks off, Lai Yun-Chi, who used to dance with Hofesh Shechter, takes a look at what lies beneath the masks we present to the world. Inspired by Taiwanese ceremonial folk ritual, her choreography (performed by her Mailantia Dance Company) blends t'ai chi with street dance.
Assembly at Dance Base, Edinburgh, to Aug 30

Pop

John Grant with Richard Hawley & Band

Will Hodgkinson

Nobody does exquisite melody like John Grant. For this concert the sombre-voiced Grant is singing the songs of the pop country legend Patsy Cline, whose style wasn't so different from his: romance, heartbreak and drama are all there. Sheffield's premier country-loving crooner Richard Hawley is backing up Grant with his band, and perhaps a few of Grant's own maudlin classics will make it into the encore.
Kelvingrove Bandstand, Glasgow, Mon

Comedy

Dropout

Dominic Maxwell

The American streaming service Dropout commandeers the Roundhouse Comedy Festival for a weekend of games. Tonight the trivia nerd show *Um, Actually* features local guests Jordan Gray, Aurie Styla and Ellie Gibson. Tomorrow *Dirty Laundry* features cocktails and indiscretions with guests Jenny Eclair, Ivo Graham, Kiell Smith-Bynoe and Stevie Martin.
Roundhouse, London, festival continues to Aug 18

Film

The Summer Book

Larushka Ivan-Zadeh

The Moomin creator Tove Jansson's 1972 story of a girl whose mother has just died asks its audience to slow down and pay attention. This film adaptation from the director Charlie McDowell (son of Malcolm) is sensitive and loving, starring Glenn Close as the wonderfully alive grandmother.

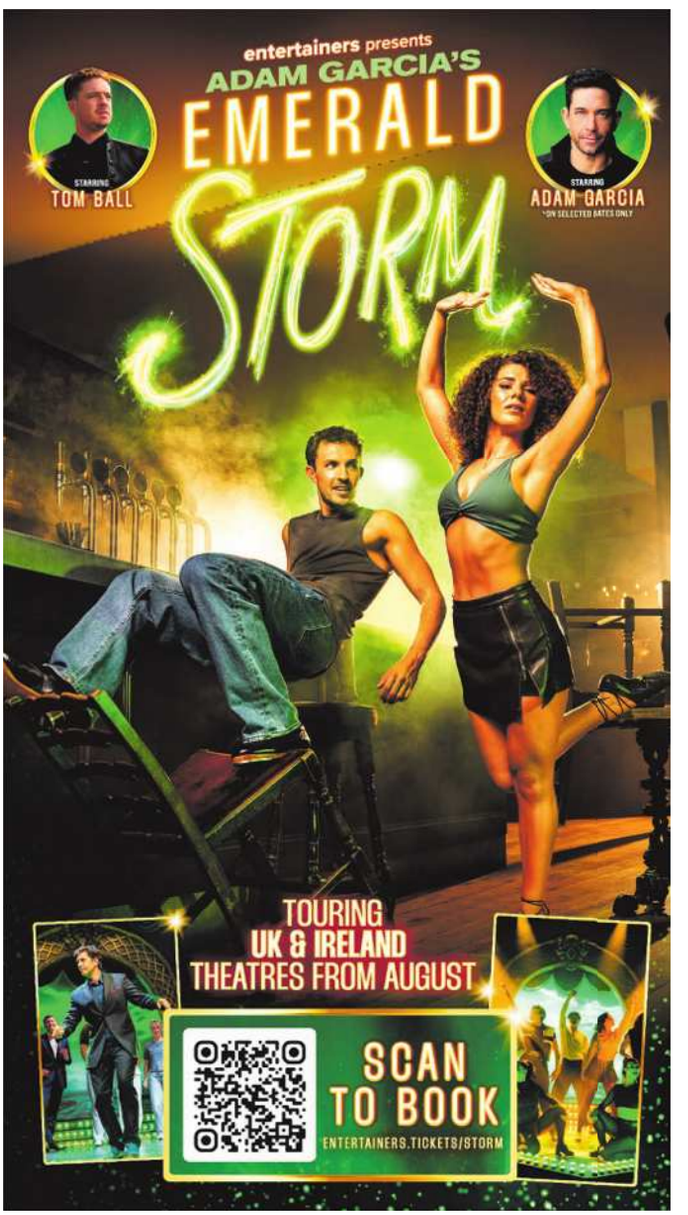
What we learnt

Guitar zero

The guitar legend Jeff Beck could be thin-skinned. When the Yardbirds were inducted into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame in 1992 he gave a peevish, bad-tempered speech. "I have done other music after the Yardbirds," he said, after being nudged to the microphone by Jimmy Page. "Anyways, somebody told me I could be proud tonight. But I'm not because they kicked me out!" *Page 13*

King tat

Edward VIII could never be accused of being bookish. When he took a Mediterranean cruise, he had all the books removed from the yacht's library before it set sail. His equerry sniffed that the yacht was "furnished rather like a Calais whore-shop". He was, though, a fan of Mickey Mouse cartoons. *Page 11*



Inside today Your 7-day guide to TV and radio **Pages 19-43**

cover story

‘I’m done with the culture wars — I

Ricky Gervais’s sweary new show Alley Cats sets out to shock. But nothing upsets him more than an animal in pain, he tells Ben Dowell

I first met Ricky Gervais in a greasy spoon in Soho, London, in late June 2001, having been persuaded by his publicist to talk to a little-known comedian who at that stage was best known for playing an obnoxious, politically incorrect correspondent in Channel 4’s *The 11 O’Clock Show*, the topical entertainment show that also launched Ali G.

The omens weren’t good. He had a new BBC comedy out but I knew the BBC didn’t tend to launch comedies it had high hopes for in the summer. Still, I agreed and watched his show, a Slough-based sitcom called... what was it now? Oh yes, *The Office*, in which he played someone called David Brent. Gervais, who had just turned 40, modestly told me that he was “not doing this because I want to be famous and be on the telly — I want to do something I am proud of”. But he said he would have been “gutted if it doesn’t go down well”. He needn’t have worried. In Brent he created one of British comedy’s greatest monsters.

It’s funny to think the slightly nervous man — a former entertainments manager at University College London — I bought a cup of tea and a cheese roll for would go on to become perhaps the biggest British entertainment force of the modern age.

Since the glory days of *The Office* he has written more acclaimed comedies: *Extras*, *Life’s Too Short* and the Netflix smash *After Life*, alongside a string of hit stand-up specials. There is a children’s book *Flanimals*, homes in Hampstead and New York, which he shares with his partner, the novelist Jane Fallon, and a sideline in a vodka brand called Dutch Barn. And let’s not forget the fun he had eviscerating the great and the good of Hollywood at the Golden Globes, causing a sea of perfectly enamelled rictus grins with lines like: “The world got to see James Corden as a fat pussy. He was also in the movie *Cats*.” Since 2001 life has given Gervais more than a cup of tea and a cheese roll.

He has just turned 65 and his latest Netflix show is *Alley Cats*, a quite stupendously sweary adult cartoon following the fortunes of a tubby puddy called Gus and his gang of mates, mooching around what looks like London and reflecting on the meaning of life and, quite often, sex. The art style is deliberately old-fashioned — two-dimensional but also warm and cosy, inspired in part by *Top Cat* (Gervais loves *The Phil Silvers Show* on which it was based), with the look owing something to less obvious cartoon moggies, including Shere Khan from *The Jungle Book*. The tone, however, is very funny and unashamedly rooted in 1990s lad culture, the era in which Gervais began working for the radio station XFM, where he met his *Office* co-writer, Stephen Merchant.

Given his love of animals — he campaigns on their behalf and is a vegan — I wonder what took him so long to do something like this. “For the past 25 years I feel I’ve always been doing two or three things at once and so one thing leads to the next. Particularly if you have a hit first series, you’ve got to strike while the iron’s hot and do a second series. Same with stand-up, for the past ten years I’ve dropped a special on Netflix and started new material nights the next week,” he says.

“At the moment I’m promoting *Alley Cats*, doing work-in-progress shows for [his next stand-up show] *Legend*, trying to make Dutch Barn a global brand, building my YouTube channel and trying to stay healthy enough so I don’t die before I get paid.”

In fact he had the seed of the idea for *Alley Cats* in lockdown. His tour *SuperNature* (2019–21) had been postponed, as had shooting the third series of *After Life*. “And I thought animation was Covid-proof. I could record on Zoom and people could animate by themselves in a sealed room. I did a sketch of Gus and pitched it to Netflix,” he says. “Two years after Covid it was commissioned. Typical.”

Well, typical only for someone who has the ear of the biggest streamer in the business, I suppose. Netflix has kept faith with Gervais despite calls for his cancellation for what some perceived as anti-trans routines in his shows *SuperNature* and *Armageddon* (2023). “I love the new women. They’re great, aren’t they? The new ones we’ve been seeing lately... the ones with beards and cocks,” he said in *SuperNature*. In the *Mortality* (2025) special he made a joke about Stephen Hawking “taking up a space” on Epstein island when he “knew paedos who would’ve killed for a ticket”.

Gervais with his wife, Jane Fallon, at the Golden Globes when he hosted in 2016

Alley Cats is tender in many places but it has some pretty ripe moments. A cat called Puke, voiced by his long-term collaborator David Earl (Kev in *Derek* and Brian in *After Life*), has particularly nasty habits — sex with hedgehogs and fish are among the ones that can be printed.

Elsewhere, the pampered cat of the group, the only moggie with owners and a secure home is mocked for not having his testicles. Voiced by Tom Basden, he is nicknamed “Ponce” by Gus and co until they find out he is called Rupert and then they call him something worse. Few comedians are as good as Gervais on showcasing how some men do intimacy — by ripping each other to shreds and swapping explicit and often cruel insults. Is he at all anxious about causing offence? I imagine not one bit. In the first 15-minute episode alone I counted 64 swearwords including 38 f***s and eight c***s.

I’ve never been bothered by swearing. If cats could talk, they definitely would swear

“I’ve never been bothered by swearing. I think it’s just part of the culture. The reason I made them swear is because I think if cats could talk, they definitely would. It shows an attitude, it shows a freedom, it shows an anger. And we have to admit, sometimes, it makes things funnier.

“I’m sure many people will find many things to be offended by — with some people it’s their job. It doesn’t bother me, no. It’s inevitable and a bit boring now. But the funny thing is they’ll have to say, ‘I was offended by what a fictional cartoon cat said.’ I can’t wait for that.”

Gervais’s world view has always shone through his work. He has long proudly declared his atheism (so it is surprising that there is a scene in *Alley Cats* in which Gus prays for the health of a kitten he has adopted) and hatred of people who are cruel to animals. In one scene Fang, Gus’s bruiser mate, performs an act of extreme violence on a youngster who kicks the kitten Olive (voiced by Diane Morgan).

There’s another moment when Gus chuckles about how he “loves it when any animal kills a human”. That sounds like Gus is channelling Gervais. Indeed, he looks like a cross between Gervais and Garfield. Was that deliberate?

“Gus is a bit like me on purpose because I wanted to evoke the classic British sitcom,” he says. “Fat, middle-aged, opinionated slob on the couch shouting at the telly. Thinks he’s in charge, thinks he’s cleverer than he is,

just want to get on with being funny'

COVER: RAY BURMISTON. BELOW: VERA ANDERSON/GETTY IMAGES; BBC; NETFLIX

From top: Gervais's big breakthrough, The Office; his first comedy series for Netflix, After Life; and his new animated show, Alley Cats

thinks he's cooler than he is. I've even got his fangs."

If Gervais were an animal he thinks he'd be a "fat old spaniel, probably... still excited about the world, still running around, still interested, still wanting to have fun, but just much, much slower, with sore legs."

After Life, a moving comedy about a man struggling with the loss of his life partner, featured a lovely alsatian called Brandy (real name Vislor Antilly). Why has he changed allegiance — from dogs to cats? "The simple answer is because cats need humans less. They can revert to being feral in a very short time. They are still little lions when it comes to it. Particularly in their heads, which makes them so funny. And yes, I feel a cat can emit true affection.

"I imagine most nice people love both [cats and dogs]. If you have to make a choice it's often practical. We have a cat instead of a dog because we travel too much. You can leave a cat with a housesitter and it's probably not that bothered. The look on a dog's face when it never knows if you're coming home again is just too traumatic for me."

What does he say to those who claim that people who love animals intensely are sometimes masking their misanthropy towards humans? I'm thinking of a moment in *Alley Cats* where Gus goes on a rant about how he hates people and wants global warming to "wipe people off the f***ing face of the earth".

"I honestly don't know," he replies. "Nothing upsets me more than an animal in pain, or in danger, or fear. I think it makes it so much worse when a human has caused that. I don't think I have empathy for animals instead of humans; I just probably extend it to animals pretty equally. I think anyone who doesn't have empathy for animals doesn't have empathy at all. I've never felt we were better than other animals, we just have a greater intelligence, so we should know better."

Gus the cat is a bit like me — a fat, middle-aged, opinionated slob. I've even got his fangs

He's not going to stop his animal activism, which includes frequent tirades on X (where he has about 14 million followers) about issues ranging from battery farming to bullfighting. "I genuinely think that if most people knew how many animals are neglected, tortured and killed for such trivial things, they'd change their ways. It's because it's always out of sight, out of mind that allows us to skip along on our merry way and not feel crippling guilt. I get that it's easy to say how can we care about hedgehogs when millions of people are starving every year? But it's not a choice. You can help both and most people who say things like that do f*** all for either."

Gervais's work has addressed freedom of speech in important ways. Has that battle been won? "It's a battle that has raged on since the beginning of language I imagine. These things are cyclic as well. I've lived through a few of these phases where these trends rise and fall, and then settle. They just come by different names. Political correctness, wokeism, cancel culture — they are all the same and they've always been around and they always will be around. It's just that the dominant mob changes. Demographics just take it in turns."

He suggests that *Legend*, which he starts touring next month and will be on Netflix at the end of 2027, won't poke the same hornets' nests. "It's the most autobiographical special I've done and I think it's a return to being honest, silly and funny. I felt like I've addressed the culture wars, free speech, wokeism and cancel culture too much in my last couple of years so I feel that's all behind me now. I just want to get on with being as funny as I can."

Despite the wishes of many fans of *The Office* and *Extras*, that is probably unlikely to include a reunion with his old writing partner, at least for now. Gervais last worked with Merchant in 2013 on the comedy *Life's Too Short* and their relationship since has been the subject of speculation.

While both men have long denied falling out, with Merchant having insisted in multiple interviews that they have simply grown apart creatively, it was noticeable that neither one appeared in a BBC reunion marking the 25th anniversary of *The Office* (it was fronted by the actors Mackenzie Crook and Martin Freeman). Instead Gervais chose to make his own hour-long YouTube special, *The 25 Greatest David Brent Moments*, a series of personal reflections on the show, which did not dwell on his collaboration with Merchant or his contribution.

As for more awards ceremony gigs, "I think I'm too old to take the pressure now," he says. "Especially something like the Golden Globes in January. It ruins Christmas. But never say never."

***Alley Cats* is on Netflix; *Ricky Gervais: Legend*, G Live, Guildford, Sep 1-2, then touring. See Carol Midgley's review of *Alley Cats*, p21**

Five comedies to watch now

Rooster *HBO Max*
Steve Carell's fabulous turn as the world-weary crime novelist Greg Russo, who starts teaching at the same liberal arts college as his daughter, Katie (Charly Clive), lifts this campus comedy into the stratosphere. A brilliant ensemble wring laughs and emotional heft from multiple storylines, including the bad behaviour of Katie's estranged and libidinous husband, the Russian literature prof Archie (Phil Dunster). Series two has been commissioned.

Ann Droid *iPlayer*
Diane Morgan is best known for her scene-stealing turns on *Motherland* and for playing the wide-eyed idiot Philomena Cunk. Here she showcases her acting skill as a robot called Linda who is assigned to the elderly Sue (played by Sue Johnston). The one-time *Brookside* star's performance delivers heart and warmth to complement the laughs of this brilliant show. A second series is likely.

Colin from Accounts *iPlayer*
This Sydney-set comedy following the medical student Ashley (Harriet Dyer) and the brewery owner Gordon (Patrick Brammall) and their dog, Colin, is the ultimate feelgood comedy. But it's never schmaltzy and the drama feels constantly alive and capable of deftly unsentimental rug-pulling. The charm and chemistry of our leading pair is no surprise — they are married in real life. A third series is expected later this year.

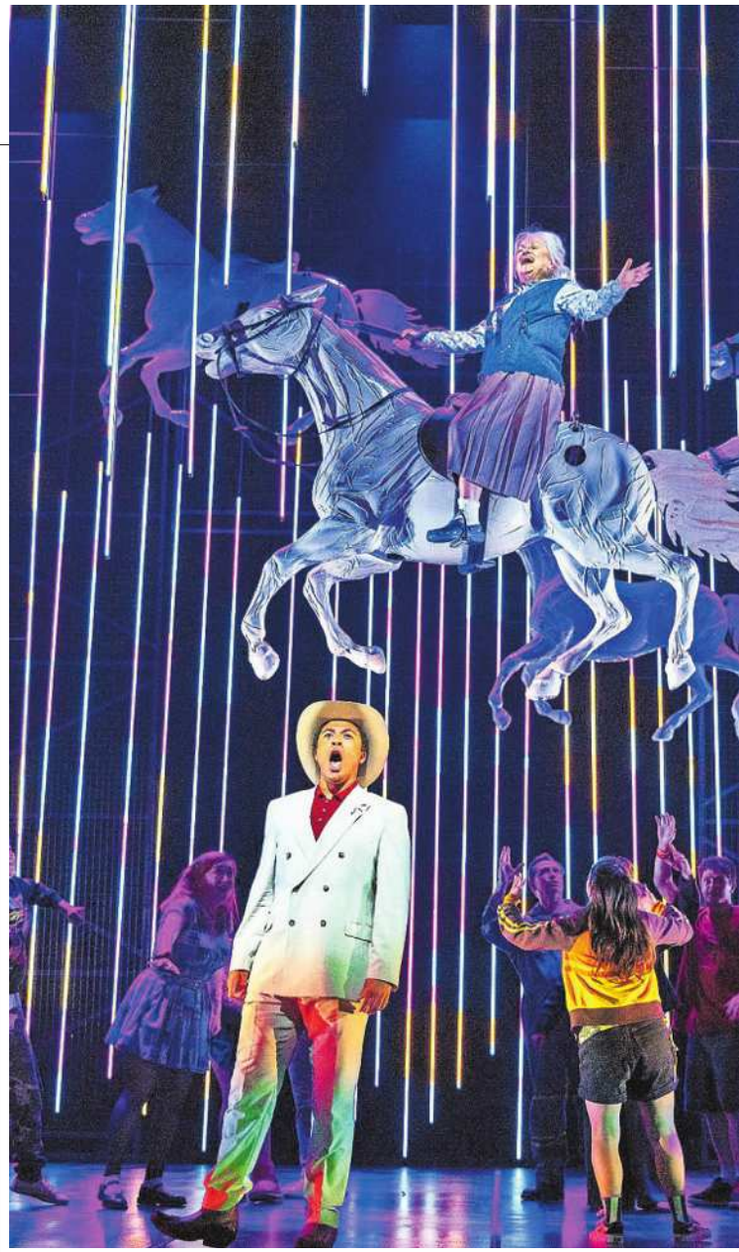
Such Brave Girls *iPlayer*
The writer and star Kat Sadler's Bafta-nominated comedy about her dysfunctional family unit and her own struggles with mental illness is sprinkled with taboo-busting jokes about self-harm, suicide and abortion. Sadler's skill at making something that sounds so defiantly and deliberately joyless so horribly funny shows what a unique talent she is. And she's brilliantly supported by Louise Brealey as her mother, Deb, and Lizzie Davidson as her sister, Billie. A third series is in the works.

Am I Being Unreasonable? *iPlayer*
Ostensibly a spiky, suburban comedy about maternal loneliness, the sharp, chaotic humour and fantastic plotting give Daisy May Cooper's comedy some deliciously dark thriller elements. Cooper excels as Nic, a mother suffocating under quiet grief and secrets, in a show that also benefits from a star-making performance from young Lenny Rush as her son, Ollie. It's inventive, funny and compulsive. A third and final series is (not unreasonably) coming down the line, possibly this year.
Ben Dowell

edinburgh

The 30 best shows to book at the Edinburgh festivals, chosen by critics

From Jack Dee's one-liners and the latest Fleabag, to Lorde and San Francisco Ballet, here are the hottest tickets in town



Comedy

by Dominic Maxwell

Ahir Shah: Golden
It's three years since Ahir Shah's last stand-up show, *Ends,* won him an Edinburgh Comedy Award. What's kept him? He will tell us, no doubt, in a follow-up about "love, money, family, responsibility, fear, forever and frogs".
Pleasance Courtyard, to Aug 30

Celia Pacquola: Gift Horse
The Australian stand-up Celia Pacquola has spun her boyfriend's 42nd birthday gift to her of an inflatable kayak into a show that won her top prize at this year's Melbourne comedy festival.
Assembly Roxy, to Aug 15

Crybabies: The Scaring
Films such as *Obsession*, *Backrooms* and *Weapons* have put horror centre stage and now comes this, the third narrative sketch show from a virtuosic trio whose spoofs have also graced Radio 4. There's more horror comedy at the same venue from Andrew Doherty's *Reviewers Welcome... TO DIE!*
Pleasance Courtyard, to Aug 30

Demi Adejuyigbe Sells Out
It's one thing to make a strong Fringe debut, as Demi Adejuyigbe did in 2024, but can lightning strike twice? That first show was so charming, inventive and full of degree-level daftness that our hopes are high.
Pleasance Dome, to Aug 30

Frank Skinner: Work in Progress
The Fringe used to be more for the rough than the ready, so why not see a comic great fine-tuning his new show for an hour? Others plying works in progress include Nish Kumar, Harriet Kemsley and Rose Matafeo.
Assembly George Square, to Aug 16

Imogen Andrews: The Unlikeable Worms
There are Fringe debuts in sweaty rooms and then there are Fringe debuts in sweaty rooms by acts who have more than 500,000 social media followers and 300 million views online. Imogen Andrews does short, sharp parodies of young, affluent urban mores.
Pleasance Courtyard, to Aug 30

Crybabies

Jack Dee: Jack's Joke Show
There aren't that many Fringe comics advertising themselves as unabashed joke tellers: Tim Vine and Mark Simmons are two prominent exceptions, but who thought gloriously grumpy old Jack Dee would be the third.
Assembly Rooms, Aug 17-23

SNL UK stars
The *Saturday Night Live* faces performing include Ania Magliano and Paddy Young, plus more from the writing team. Larry Dean is one to catch. He hasn't made as big an impression as some of his co-stars, but has long been an exceptional live comedian.
Pleasance Courtyard, Aug 5-30,

Lorde

Theatre

by Clive Davis

Via Dolorosa by David Hare
The actor Gary Hay revisits the playwright David Hare's clear-eyed account of his journeys through a troubled land, from Jerusalem to Gaza and Ramallah. Both sides have their say.
Studio at theSpaceTriplex, to Aug 22

A Trial — after An Enemy of the People
Ibsen gets an update from the Brazilian director Christiane Jatahy. The star of the hit film *The Secret Agent*, Wagner Moura, plays the whistleblower who faces becoming an outcast. Eleven members of the audience can put themselves forward as the jury for a trial scene.
Royal Lyceum Theatre, to Mon

Blackbox
In the 19th century Henry "Box" Brown was a bona fide American celebrity: a former slave who escaped by hiding inside a crate that was shipped north to Philadelphia. The gospel-infused story is retold by the hip-hop theatremaker Rickerby Hinds.
Belly Button at Underbelly, to Aug 30

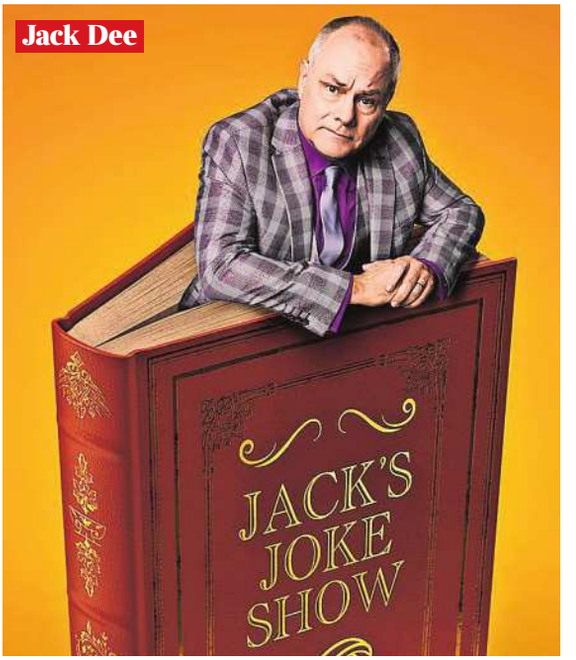
Roleplay
This comes from the same stable that brought us *Fleabag* and *Baby Reindeer,* so it's no surprise that Hannah Reilly's play has already created a stir. She portrays a feminist podcaster who decides to reinvent herself as a "slutfluencer" as a way of getting hits.
Summerhall, to Aug 31

Annie Wobbler (Revisited)
It's almost half a century since Arnold Wesker wrote this confessional piece for the actress Nichola McAuliffe. Now she returns to these portraits of three women, exploring identity, ageing and impostor syndrome. It's also a homage of sorts to Wesker's widow, Dusty.
Pleasance Dome, to Aug 31

Angels in America
Tony Kushner's panoramic vision of America during the Aids crisis returns to the stage in a reworking by that hyperactive director Ivo van Hove and Internationaal Theater Amsterdam (it's in Dutch with surtitles). Van Hove squeezes both parts, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika,* into a single five-hour performance.
King's Theatre, Aug 15-20

Mrs Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library
Hannah Arendt provides the inspiration for Jenny Lyn Bader's drama, receiving its European premiere, of a philosophy graduate student who is interrogated by a young Gestapo officer in Berlin in 1933. Arendt herself was taken into custody before going into exile.
Traverse, to Aug 30

ANTONIA BAIN



Adam Riches: The Captain
He won no end of acclaim last year for his portrait of the brattish American tennis ace Jimmy Connors and is back with a celebration of a pioneer from a very different age — Matthew Webb, the first man to swim the English Channel.
Summerhall, to Aug 31

Opera/Classical

by Richard Morrison

The Galloping Cure
Missy Mazzoli is possibly the most talked-about opera composer to have emerged from the US in recent years. Her new work, created with the librettist Royce Vavrek, promises topical provocation. Premiered by Scottish Opera, it's a parable about an addictive fairground ride promising miraculous relief from aches and pains.
Festival Theatre, tomorrow-Wed

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis
Wynton Marsalis and his all-star band are featured several times in the International Festival's opening week, nowhere more intriguingly than in this collaboration with the dazzling virtuoso classical pianist Yuja Wang. She can play anything, but can she swing it with the best jazzers in the world?
Usher Hall, Wed

Bach to Bach
A day to immerse yourself in the various worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach. In the morning you can rehearse and perform the wonderful harmonies of his Passion Chorales; in the afternoon hear all six cello suites performed by the magnificent Alisa Weilerstein; and in the evening marvel at Vikingur Olafsson playing his keyboard music alongside sonatas by Beethoven and Schubert.
Usher Hall, Aug 22

A Masked Ball
Zurich Opera House has a world-class reputation and Gianandrea Noseda is a superb conductor of Verdi, so the omens are good for this production, with excellent casts alternating. Adele Thomas has updated the story to the American Gilded Age, so the costumes should be lavish.
Festival Theatre, Aug 26-30

Berliner Philharmonic
What a mouthwatering way to end the International Festival: two concerts from the reliably stupendous Berliners under their chief conductor, Kirill Petrenko. There's curiosity value, too, in hearing how they interpret the quintessentially English music of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, as well as Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Scriabin.
Usher Hall, Aug 29-30

Pop

by Will Hodgkinson

Lorde
Consistently finding the sweet spot between confessional songwriting, art rock and big tunes, New Zealand's Ella Yellich-O'Connor has held on to a rare thing in big pop stars: restraint. Yet she knows how to put on a big show, with huge hits like *Green Light* and *Royals*.
Royal Highland Showgrounds, Aug 25

Horsegirl
This Chicago indie-rock trio have approached Velvet Underground-like levels of minimalism: simple, fuzzy guitar lines, unchanging beats, catchy tunes, emotional themes captured through just a few words. Touring their latest album, *Phonetics On and On*, this will be a low-key delight.
La Belle Angele, Aug 23

Orchestra Baobab
Starting out as the house band of the Baobab club in Dakar in 1970, this Senegalese troupe called it a day in 1987. But then their debut album, *Pirate's Choice*, an intoxicating blend of jazz, salsa and west African music, was reissued in 2001 and they became a phenomenon.
The Hub, Aug 28

Dance

by Debra Craine

Ihsane
Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui explores grief in a new work that pays tribute to Ihsane Jarfi, a gay Moroccan man who was tortured and killed in Liège in 2012. It was the first official homophobic murder recognised under Belgian law. In its choreography and music, Cherkaoui's show also celebrates the culture of north Africa and the Middle East.
Festival Theatre, Aug 18-20

When Prophecy Fails
Groupwork's physical theatre offering is also inspired by a true story, this one about the world's first UFO doomsday cult, located in a small town in the American Midwest in the 1950s. Its members believe that only a flying saucer can save them from an apocalyptic flood. But what happens when that belief gets a reality check?
Studio Theatre, Potterrow, Aug 27-30

Mere Mortals
San Francisco Ballet scored a big hit at home with Aszure Barton's AI cautionary tale, in which Pandora's box is a metaphor for the hidden dangers of a tech-obsessed world. The ballet gets its European premiere at the International Festival, with a score by Floating Points performed live with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.
Playhouse, Aug 28-30

Visual art

by Laura Freeman

Songs of Innocence & Experience, Part II
The Ingleby Gallery can be relied on to put on unpredictable shows. *Songs of Innocence & Experience, Part II* marks the centenary of the birth in Antigua of the artist Frank Bowling with a dreamy, soaring, seafaring exhibition of his paintings alongside Andrew Cranston, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Peter Doig and Rose Wylie, who he inspired.
Ingleby Gallery, to Sep 12

Elizabeth Blackadder: A Life in Colour
The artist Elizabeth Blackadder, known for her reticent yet romantic botanical studies and still-life compositions, also worked for more than 50 years with the master weavers Dovecot Studios. Thirty of her tapestries and hand-tufted rugs are gathered for this exhibition, marking five years since Blackadder's death.
Dovecot Studios, to Nov 14

Gwen John: Strange Beauties
Missed Gwen John in Cardiff? Follow this exhibition, the first big retrospective of her work in 40 years, north. Her self-possessed sitters and appraising self-portraits should offer some respite from the showboating, feather boas and frantic flyering of the festival.
Modern Two, National Galleries of Scotland, to Jan 4

edinburgh

I was a teenage Harry Potter star —

Jessie Cave has made more money selling videos of her hair than she did acting. But she worries what happens next. By Alice Jones

Jessie Cave would like to talk about money. How, after 18 years as an actress, she ran out of it. And how she came up with a new way to stay afloat. Having found fame playing Lavender Brown in the Harry Potter films when she was 19 years old, she appeared in television shows such as *Trollied* and *Call the Midwife*, starred in *Arcadia* in the West End, performed her own critically acclaimed one-woman shows, wrote a Sunday Times bestselling novel (*Sunset*) and, somehow, in the middle of it all, had four children with her fiancé, the comedian Alfie Brown. Early last year, aged 38, she reached breaking point.

She had received yet another rejection after a callback audition and didn't know what to do next. "I couldn't go and, say, work in a supermarket because I can't afford the childcare, and also I don't want people shouting Harry Potter spells at me as I work at Tesco. I could retrain but I can't afford to do a degree. I had a breakdown and I thought, that's it with acting, I give up. But also we have no money. It was a point of complete desperation."

And so, in March 2025, Cave, formerly of Hogwarts, joined OnlyFans. The website is a platform where content creators post videos for paid subscribers. The content is, overwhelmingly, adult, though there are others (a minority) like Cave who use it as a slightly risqué alternative revenue stream.

In 2024 Lily Allen sold pictures of her feet for $10 (£7) a month, while Kate Nash used the site to subsidise her loss-making live tour in a campaign she titled *Butts for Tour Buses*. For her part, Cave posts (fully clothed) "hair content" — videos of her brushing it while dressed as an elf, a maid or Lavender Brown, plaiting it, shaking it, tying it around her waist, doing anything she can with it, really, for people who like that sort of thing. And it turns out, there are quite a few of them.

"I thought I'd make five grand, be on it for a few months and it would buy me time to work out what we're going to do," she says. "But it's now been over a year and a half and it's genuinely saved our lives."

We meet on a hot day in central London and Cave's shiny blonde hair is neatly coiled in a bun. You can't give this stuff away. "How long is it?" I ask. "It's down to my vagina," she says breezily. "I could trim it but the truth is, the weirder the better."

In her more traditional line of work Cave comes across as a sweet, funny, anxious figure, her pixie-like face hidden behind owlishly large glasses, which is not to say she lacks edge. Her live shows feature embroidered likenesses of her love interests and shadow puppetry, but they are also defined by compulsive oversharing and bracingly frank anecdotes about dating and sex.

Still, to hear her explain in her sing-song voice how she makes most of her money on "Wet Hair Wednesdays" is discombobulating. "My rule is the hair is the main character. That's how I justify it. It's literally about hair: the texture of hair. The fetish. It's very, very niche."

To money, then. Cave has subscribers who pay $6 a month to watch her content and she makes more from "paid-for messages" throughout the month. She went viral with her first post (thank you, Harry Potter), which gave her 3,500 subscribers from the off.

"Think of that money," she marvels. Within a day she had earned back what she paid for her accommodation at the Edinburgh Fringe — £15,000 — the previous year. "And I've earned more, easily, than my entire acting career within one year." Her numbers dropped off when people realised hers was a non-explicit page. Now she prefers not to say how many subscribers she has "because it's so embarrassing", but they're a loyal bunch.

She thinks more artists will join her. "I do predict more people needing to use other platforms to make money when they're not being an artist," she says. "I see people on Instagram posting bikini shots or sexy stuff and I think, you could be charging for this! You're losing money! I see that being the future. Everyone will be paying for everything."

It's a dystopian world view where every interaction is monetised and, frankly, pornified. OnlyFans is not Instagram: did she worry about the association with the adult industry and the alleged abuse and exploitation on the platform? "There is a stigma," she says. "I didn't really understand the risk of people thinking I'm doing porn." That said, her acting auditions haven't dried up. "I mean, I definitely won't work on kids' TV again, but I don't want to.

"And yes, [OnlyFans] is largely porn. But there are cooking videos, tarot readings, personal training — it's just all done with a sexy edge. It is about wanting some kind of gaze... I wear baggy T-shirts on stage, I've never posted a bikini shot, I wear huge glasses. For so long I've just been this quirky figure. After having four kids and feeling invisible for so long that was really appealing to me."

Earlier this year she had breast enlargement surgery, an intervention she describes coolly as a "business decision". Her subscribers paid for it. "I've always wanted a boob job, but part of me realised I'm not going to last a year on OnlyFans with what I've got — my hair can only do so much." Even so, she thinks she has "barely any time" left to make money on the site. Why?

"Because I'm not going naked. I don't even talk on it. But I don't know how long I can last if I don't start giving more," she says. "The bottom line is I can't afford to stop and I do enjoy a lot of it. There's a lot that I don't enjoy too."

The actress, comedian, author and now OnlyFans content creator, Jessie Cave. Below: with her fiancé, the comedian Alfie Brown

Now she has written a new live show, *Only Work [in Progress]*, which she will perform at the Edinburgh Fringe. "It's talking about this dilemma of being an artist right now. How do you survive as an artist who wants to really make something creative and authentic, but also make money? I really do believe that what I am doing is some kind of art."

She tells me that earlier this year she shot a film, *Curse in a Frame*, in which she plays a woman who buys a "haunted" painting. She plays the lead alongside Susan Wokoma and it is directed by Maria Pawlikowska, the daughter of the *Cold War* director Pawel Pawlikowski. It was a dream experience, she says.

"But I lost money because of childcare. I thought, all I ever wanted was to do something good and now here it is and I'm basically paying to do it. I finished on set, went into the bathroom, did my content, wrote my Substack on the train home. I was working overtime to justify the film."

In Edinburgh she will also reprise her 2018 show *Sunrise* for two nights as part of Shedinburgh, a mini-festival within the Fringe. A brilliant show about the juggle of motherhood and breaking up from and co-parenting with Brown (they got back together), it is also the show that marked the end of her old life.

She was halfway through a sold-out run at the Soho Theatre in London in 2018 when her younger brother, Ben, died, having been electrocuted on the train tracks in Hackney Wick, during a night out. He was 27 years old. The next night she went back on stage. "I said, 'Of course, I'm doing it. If I don't do it then I have to admit that this has happened.'" The extreme nature of his death has made it hard for her to move on.

"It's been seven years and I just haven't recovered. I've always prided myself on being strong, but I'm really not," she says. "*Sunrise* was the end of that phase of my life and it's been so different ever since."

Cave grew up in west London, the second oldest of five siblings, with

now I'm on OnlyFans

'I'm not going naked. I don't even talk. But I don't know how long I can last if I don't start giving more'

Cave with her Harry Potter cast mates in 2009. Above: as Lavender Brown in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

parents who are doctors. As a teenager she was a promising tennis player but her career ended when her coach raped her — an experience she explores in *Sunrise*. She turned to theatre and got a place at drama school but before she could take it up she got the part that would change her life, beating 7,000 other teenagers at an open audition to the role of Lavender, Ron Weasley's girlfriend.

In the 16 years since she has attended Harry Potter fan conventions but that's over now. "I'm not doing that ever again. I'm genuinely still so grateful for that job, but it comes with a lot of baggage. It's partly shame. You want to go to a convention when you feel good about your career."

JK Rowling and her views on transgender rights also played a part. "It was the final straw. I don't like the association with JK Rowling any more. I don't want to talk about her. But then I also feel weird when we're all at a convention where she's not being mentioned when she wrote the thing. Let's not give her any more oxygen."

In 2012 she met Brown, a scabrous stand-up and the son of the composer Steve Brown, who died in 2024, and the impressionist Jan Ravens. They live in a brightly painted house in Liverpool, having left their one-bedroom flat in east London last year, and plan to marry in June next year.

They also co-host a podcast, *Before We Break Up Again*, where they talk about, well, mainly each other. And there is plenty to talk about. She and Brown met at the Fringe and later went on one date, after which Cave discovered she was pregnant. She didn't tell Brown for more than three months. They decided to bring up the baby together and swiftly had a second. And then, well, it gets even more complicated.

"In the last seven years we had two babies in less than two years. We broke up and got back together, had two more babies, Alfie got cancelled [a video resurfaced of him using the n-word in a routine], we lost all of our money and Alfie's dad died."

By any standards she has been through the mill. I wonder, is she happier now? "I'm just not a happy person, but I'm really happy that my kids are happy. And I'm really happy that I've provided for them and that we're getting our lives together. I'm working really hard to try and feel happy."

In September her youngest child will start school and her oldest senior school. It feels like a watershed moment when she can work out her next step. "I would like to be able to continue without having to..." she trails off. "I would like to cut my hair at some point, is what I'm saying."

She has a vision of recreating Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, posing in a giant shell wrapped in her own hair. "And then I'll cut it off live and sell the hair. And that would be my final OnlyFans day," she says, smiling. "That's my goal."

***Jessie Cave: Sunrise* is at Shedinburgh, Assembly Checkpoint, Edinburgh, tomorrow and Mon; *Only Work [in Progress]* is at Just the Tonic at the Caves, Edinburgh, to Thu**

my culture fix

Russell Tovey

The actor adores the playwright Patrick Marber and Robin Williams

My favourite film

The film that changed my life was *Dead Poets Society* with Robin Williams. I was probably too young to watch it, 10 or 11, but it emotionally transformed me and started an obsession with Williams. Looking back, the film made me realise the power that someone can have through a performance to affect somebody they've never met.

My favourite play

Closer by Patrick Marber. I love it because of the way that the characters connect with each other. They're all flawed, they're all cheating and they're all vulnerable, yet they're all trying to think they're doing the right thing for themselves. They're very selfish, but they also feel like they have to be. I look back to being 18, when I started reading plays consistently in the way that people read books or comics. I was buying David Mamet, David Hare, Alan Bennett and then I stumbled across this play called *Closer* by Patrick Marber. It changed everything for me — and I've never seen it performed on stage. At the time I was doing a play and the actress Debra Gillett took me under her wing; after learning my favourite play she said, "Oh, Patrick's my partner," introducing me to him a year later.

My favourite author

On my bookshelf I have *John of John* by Douglas Stuart and *Blow by Blow: The Story of Isabella Blow*, *above*, by Detmar Blow and Tom Sykes because I've just done a short film about Alexander McQueen. I always have Andy Warhol's diaries next to my bed.

The book I'm ashamed I haven't read

Moby-Dick. And *The Odyssey*.

Favourite book

The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller.

The first book that made me cry

The Snowman (1978). I must have been seven or eight when I read it. At the end the snowman melted and I cried my eyes out. I remember thinking it's so tragic that he's gone, but how amazing it is that this has made me cry.

The poet that saved me

David Robilliard. I made a documentary about him a few years ago because I didn't feel enough people knew him. He died in 1988, when he was 36, and when I was 36, I discovered his art, and it terrified me that I was his age. I felt I wasn't ready to die, yet he did. He had this incredible output of work, it's so contemporary and so gay.

A poem that resonates with me

This Be the Verse by Philip Larkin. I've also recently been reminded of *Musée des Beaux Arts* by WH Auden. It's about the painting of Icarus descending into the sea. It portrays this boy who has got too close to the sun, his wings singed, and has descended into the water. Yet ships sail by, and people are sort of chilling. I think it's so true: there are terrible atrocities happening and yet here we are talking, and I'll probably go and get a coffee later.

If I could own one painting it would be

I love Susan Rothenberg. She made horse paintings at a time when there was a lot of abstract expressionism and art made by men. To me, her paintings are perfect. *Night Fishing at Antibes* by Picasso is another. There are fishermen and girls on bikes eating ice cream, and all kinds of fish swimming around with big eyes. When I saw it in the flesh I was floored.

An instrument I played

The violin when I was a little boy, but I lost interest. I learnt piano for a while before my piano teacher went Awol. The universe has not encouraged me to play instruments in the way it has with writing and acting.

I'm having a fantasy dinner party. I'll invite these artists and authors

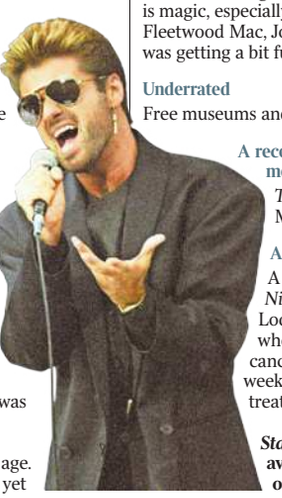
Derek Jarman. He's a hero, from film to his diaries to gardening, art and poetry — most of all for his activism. George Michael, *below*, another hero. His bravery for who he was, and to have no shame inspires me greatly. I'm sad we never met, I think we would have been mates. Alexander McQueen too.

And I'll put on this music

Rufus Wainwright, his whole catalogue is magic, especially *The Art Teacher*. Plus Fleetwood Mac, Joni Mitchell and, if it was getting a bit funky, Maxwell.

Underrated

Free museums and galleries.



A recent film that's made me laugh

The Last Viking, from Mads Mikkelsen.

A film that changed me

A French film called *Nino* directed by Pauline Loquès. It's about a guy who discovers he has cancer and has this weekend before he has treatment. It's so beautiful.

***Starlings* is now available to listen to on Audible**

books

This memoir is mawkish, puffed-up and hard to believe

Book of the week

Jason Arday's life story feels precision-tooled to flatter the biases of the sappiest white liberals.
By Sarah Ditum

Great and Unfortunate Things
by Jason Arday
Simon & Schuster
£20 pp288

Jason Arday is a truly incredible man. In 2023, aged 37, he became the youngest black professor to have been appointed at the University of Cambridge. Remarkable in itself, but Arday was no prodigy: until the age of 11 his autism left him nonverbal, and he was illiterate until he was 18, leaving school with just two GCSEs (in PE and textiles).

This child born in poverty and disadvantage to a Ghanaian family in Clapham went on to complete a PhD. Moreover, he did this — incredibly — while suffering from a brain tumour. That might suggest a single-minded intellectual focus, but Arday is also a dedicated sportsman. According to one online biography, he played football and snooker to professional level.

But Arday set such pursuits aside, channelling his athleticism instead into some incredible feats of endurance. In one, he ran 600 miles in six days; in another, he ran 30 marathons in 35 days. These elite-level achievements raised £5 million (or £5.5 million, depending on the source) in sponsorship. Arday is an incredibly charitable man: he also travelled to South America to install pumps for Water Aid.

Yes, this is incredible stuff, and in the run-up to the publication of Arday's autobiography, *Great and Unfortunate Things*, his story has been put under new scrutiny. It has not borne the attention well. Many of the well-publicised claims about his life have crumbled, and Arday has been on a weeks-long retraction tour before his book is even out.

Those 600 miles in six days, which would have made him one of the best ultrarunners in the world? Actually, he ran them over a less impressive 12 days. The brief professional-level careers in football and snooker? An erroneous transcription from an interview, apparently (the University of Bath, which published the claim in a blog, has issued a retraction).

The astonishing £5 million (or £5.5 million) sponsorship? Arday now says he didn't raise it by himself, but as part of a "syndicate". Alas, non-disclosure agreements mean he cannot identify the other members. The charitable work in South America? Water Aid says that it does not send volunteers overseas and its name has been erased from Arday's online bio.

This is all embarrassing, but arguably trivial. More serious are the allegations that Arday plagiarised parts of his PhD from another student's thesis. Liverpool John Moores University, which awarded his doctorate, investigated and found no wrongdoing, although Arday did admit to significant citation errors, which he blamed on inadequate supervision.

Another incredible thing about Arday: his bad luck. Misquoted and missupervised, has any man ever been let down so badly by the media and academia? In an interview with The Times, Arday insisted that he was not a liar, and blamed the criticism of him on a "dark arts" campaign. This week Arday resigned his position at Cambridge, presumably meaning he is now the university's youngest black ex-professor.

Still, he seems to have some useful support from the establishment. When a journalist from the Times Higher Education Supplement began investigating the plagiarism claims last year, Arday reported him to the police. The police told the journalist the case was closed, but that he should refrain from contacting Arday because it was affecting Arday's mental health.

Maybe I should turn myself in to the nearest cop shop now, because this review is not going to improve Arday's mood. *Great and Unfortunate Things* is mawkish, self-aggrandising and hard to believe. Extraordinary claims are made with no supporting evidence. Arday's story — regardless of its authenticity — feels precision-tooled to flatter the biases of the sappiest white liberals.

It all begins in a London council home ("one of the last council houses to be built in Margaret Thatcher's Britain"), where young Arday was brought up by a father so hardworking he is essentially absent, and a mother (referred to as Giff) whose entire personality is "strong Black African woman". That's a direct quote from the book, by the way: plagiarist or not, Arday can't be accused of originality in his prose.

The former Cambridge professor Jason Arday

As young Arday failed to hit his milestones, doctors declared him "deficient" and said he was "no better than a vegetable". Arday was, by his own account, a profoundly intellectually disabled child. He claims that he could "register sounds, but I couldn't shape them into meaning". He also says that smearing his faeces on the wall was one of his few sensory releases.

For most of us it is hard to create memories before we have words. It's a challenge that Arday acknowledges. "Most of my memories of my early childhood are of generalised images, sounds, sensations, feelings, rather than specific events, perhaps because language helps us to form memories, and I didn't have access to that until I was older."

And yet Arday has astonishing, sometimes verbatim, recall from his early years. He remembers his mother telling him and his brothers: "I do not want any of you to think a woman's purpose is to serve you in any way, shape or form!" (You go, strong woman!) He also says she taught her boys to keep house "as soon as we were old enough" — presumably after he grew out of playing with his own waste.

He remembers that his parents' sofa was bought on credit. He remembers the Artex plaster on the walls. He remembers the exact position of his speech therapist's glasses on her nose, and that she was called Katrina. This is all suspiciously specific for someone nonverbal.

One notable feature of the book is what it omits. Several of Arday's more incredible achievements are either not mentioned or included in a softened form. His adolescent football career doesn't figure, and nor does the 600 miles in six days challenge. His remarkable fundraising achievements are alluded to, but no definitive figure is given. Perhaps his co-writer, Eve Claxton, did a little judicious fact-checking.

Water Aid isn't mentioned by name, although there is a generic reference to installing water pumps in Brazilian favelas. Yet there's surprisingly little detail on Arday's experience of travelling to South America, which would surely have left an impression on a man whose family were so poor, their idea of a holiday was a trip to Clapham Common.

There are, however, some new additions to the Arday canon. The brain tumour, for example — treatment for which caused him to lose his memory just before his viva, so he had to relearn his whole thesis from scratch. He also writes that he was severely beaten at 18 by four youths in an unprovoked attack, causing him to have lifelong seizures.

Arday is not a man to hold a grudge, though. In fact, he's such a liberal paragon that he made a victim personal statement pleading for lenience. "I wanted them to focus on their education and move forward with their lives," he writes, nobly. (In another instance of Arday's bad luck, I could track down no contemporary news report of the crime or the court case.)

Even for the not-notably-modest genre of the inspirational poverty-porn memoir, Arday lays it on a bit thick. He compares himself at various points with Rocky (driven, gritty), Forrest Gump (simple, wise) and God. Seriously: his mother apparently believed that "just because God wasn't always visible, that didn't mean he wasn't there", and held that the same must be true for Arday's intelligence.

JOSHUA BRATT FOR THE TIMES

Jason Arday's self-mythologising is funny, but it's also done real damage

And that points to the ultimate cruelty of this story. Arday's self-mythologising is funny, but it has done real damage — most significantly to nonverbal children and their families. By promoting the medically unusual story of his own late-childhood flourishing, Arday is creating false hope. Parents will blame themselves, wrongly, for not living up to the impossible standard of Giff.

There is other harm too. Think of the early career lecturers who applied for the same positions as Arday, but didn't have his riveting narrative of overcoming adversity. Think of the students he taught, who now know that they were being educated by someone who couldn't even get his own referencing right. Think of all the diligent, decent black academics who have been lumbered with the embarrassment of having Arday as a figurehead.

Not all the victims here are innocent. Cambridge and academia in general have earned their humiliation. As Black Lives Matter fervour peaked, it's easy to see how someone like Arday was too good to question. He was promoted to huge prominence because he was a fashionable mascot: not just black, but neurodiverse too! (If only he had thought of being queer, he might have been able to swat away the criticism for longer.)

Nor do I have any sympathy for his publisher. Fact-checking works of non-fiction should be standard practice. Instead, as we know from *The Salt Path*, it's often no more than an exercise in libel-proofing: reality doesn't matter. Arday still has defenders who claim he is the victim of a racist stitch-up. In a post-truth world, audacity beats veracity every time.

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What to read after seeing The Odyssey

Try these books if you're still yearning for Homer's world. By Harry Sidebottom

MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey. Below: the classicist Emily Wilson, who's not impressed with the film

Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* is the blockbuster film of the summer. Many viewers will want to find out more about the ancient Greeks and the classical world. But if you don't know your Aeschylus from your Euripides, it is hard to know where to begin. There are many dull and bad books out there. So here are a few that are both informative and actually enjoyable to read.

The obvious place to start is Homer's **The Odyssey** in the 2017 translation by Emily Wilson. Yet that is to sail straight into controversy. Nolan said it was his inspiration. Wilson, however, while "humbled" to learn this, dislikes the film intensely, saying she would have been ashamed to have written any part of the script.

Her translation into iambic pentameter is deliberately modern, edgy and accessible. Compare her version of the opening line — "Tell me about a complicated man" — to the, inexplicably still popular, plodding prose of EV Rieu: "Tell me, Muse, the story of that resourceful man who was driven to wander far and wide after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy." Five punchy words — the Muse has gone, and Odysseus has moved from cunning to conflicted — all much more in tune with a 21st-century audience.

To really understand *The Odyssey* you need to know the Trojan war from which the hero was struggling to return, and that means reading Homer's **The Iliad**. The 1951 verse translation by Richmond Lattimore is a modern classic: sonorous, poetic and accurate. There appears to be an unwritten rule that anyone who translates one of the epics has to do the other too. Lattimore's *Odyssey* is a good alternative for those who find Wilson's version too contemporary.

Homer's epics stand at the end of about 500 years of oral poetry. From the end of the Mycenaean age (about 1180BC) bards told and retold the stories, adapting and altering them, until, at some point in the 8th century BC, each was composed by one poetic genius (or more probably two) in the form they were written down. Jasper Griffin's **Homer** is a concise and witty way into the poetry. No other scholar had discussed the lack of "ignoble bodily functions"; unlike in Irish heroic poems, no character in Homer ever needs to relieve themselves.

Nolan's film predictably unleashed a babel of internet keyboard warriors howling about its "historical inaccuracy", which is odd given that Homer created a poetic, fictional world that included elements from half a millennium of the Greek past. Since excavations in the 1980s at Troy of level VI (as archaeologists call the best candidate for the period of the Trojan war) scholars have shifted towards the plausibility of Homer's stories. A bracing example is **The Trojan War: A New History** by Barry Strauss. Trying to match the archaeology to Homer, Strauss sometimes uses the present tense and includes lyrical descriptions of landscape. It is a rare history book that deserves the overused modern cliché that it reads like a novel.

Another unusually imaginative piece of scholarship broadens the picture out to encompass the whole Mediterranean and beyond. **Travelling Heroes: Greeks and Their Myths in the Epic Age of Homer** by Robin Lane Fox is underpinned by profound and enviable knowledge of both the archaeology and Homer, yet written with a lively style that can be appreciated by anyone. It is also enlivened by a trademark of Lane Fox: autopsy, in the sense of going to places and looking for himself.

One can be reasonably confident, and perhaps slightly reassured, in stating that no other senior member of the faculty of *literae humaniores* in the University of Oxford has emulated Achilles by running naked around the site of Troy.

Homer's poetry acts as a gateway into all subsequent classical history. Not just Greek, but also Roman. From about 200BC Roman schoolchildren used Homer to learn Greek at the same stage they were learning to read and write Latin. As is often said, Homer was the nearest thing pagans had to a Bible. The epics shaped the way people thought. **Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction** by Paul Cartledge is structured by chapters on 11 Greek cities, from Knossos to Byzantium, to range across vast swathes of geography and time.

The Odyssey has inspired writers from Virgil to James Joyce. Luckily there are modern novels that do not demand as much from the reader as *The Aeneid* and *Ulysses*. Pat Barker's **The Silence of the Girls**, the first of her Women of Troy trilogy, tells the Trojan war through the eyes of the slave girl Briseis, who has no lines in Homer. Along with **Circe** by Madeline Miller, it launched a thousand imitators. As always with literary trends, it is far more rewarding to read the innovative originators than the derivative followers.

A final recreation of the Homeric world is Mary Renault's story of the hero Theseus in two novels: **The King Must Die** (1958) and **The Bull from the Sea** (1962). They contain a great deal of now discredited thinking about mother goddesses and matriarchy in the heroic age. Yet, like Homer, they construct a completely coherent and absorbing fictional world. If they sound too alternative history, then move forwards in time and try **The Last of the Wine**, her 1956 novel featuring Socrates, which explored Greek sexuality. It has a strong claim to be one of the finest modern works of fiction set in the ancient world.

Harry Sidebottom is a lecturer in ancient history at Lincoln College, Oxford

books

‘The man is mad. MAD!’ The king who gave up the crown for ‘love’

The silly, entitled Edward VIII was ‘the slave of a common little American’. By Alwyn Turner

‘A great love story that will be told forever,” declared a newspaper headline in 1936, and 90 years later, here’s another account of the relationship between Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson — although whether it’s actually a love story is not entirely certain.

As the Prince of Wales, Edward had a succession of affairs, more interested in possessing other men’s wives than in acquiring one for himself. He was 36 when he met Wallis, a divorced American socialite then married to the shipbroker Ernest Simpson, and it was assumed that she was just another in the line of dalliances. But somehow she was different and became the object of his adoration. By the time his father, George V, died in January 1936 and Edward had succeeded to the throne, he and Wallis had been lovers for two years, and he was pressurising her to get divorced so they could marry, despite her obvious unsuitability for the role. Surely no spoiler alert is needed for how it turns out?

Despite the familiarity of the tale, though, Sian Evans’s wonderful book is a gripping read. She writes coolly, allowing the sensational implications to speak for themselves, and happily avoids drawing any contemporary parallels. (The present Queen has a living ex-husband, social values having changed in the interim.)

After a scene-setting introduction, she confines herself to the single year that marked the beginning and end of Edward’s reign, set out in monthly chapters. Most of the narrative is a succession of private dinners, family gatherings and high-powered meetings, as a small group of men go round and round the same arguments, with Edward, displaying the stubbornness of the weak man, refusing to see why he should put duty to the nation above his own wishes. Eventually, he threatens the prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, that he’ll abdicate if he doesn’t get his own way, and Baldwin takes him at his word, ensuring that the crown passes smoothly to his younger brother, George VI.

Edward comes out of it very badly: penny-pinching, entitled and, above all, a philistine. He walks out of a party where the pianist Arthur Rubinstein is playing Chopin (although he returns when Noël Coward strikes up *Don’t Put Your Daughter on the Stage, Mrs Worthington*). Told that Rudyard Kipling has died, he appears not to have heard of the world’s most famous poet of the time. When he takes a Mediterranean cruise, he has all the books removed from the yacht’s library before sailing. (His equerry sniffed that the yacht was “furnished rather like a Calais whore-shop”.) He was, though, a fan of Mickey Mouse cartoons.

His relationship with Wallis was not one of equals. Henry “Chips” Channon, a Conservative MP and society gossip, wrote that “the King is the slave of a slightly common little American”, and the word “slave” isn’t much of an exaggeration. Even in company he would kneel to take off her shoes and to paint her toenails. “If he asked her for a light for his cigarette,” Evans writes, “she would make him sit up and beg for it, like a dog.” (A footman resigned in protest at his self-abasement.) He kept 16 photos of her in his bedroom, and whenever she suggested they break off the relationship, he would threaten suicide, vowing to slit his throat.

Baldwin thought that parts of Edward’s brain were still those of a 13-year-old boy and concluded that “the man is mad. MAD!” The spy Bruce Lockhart identified it as “dementia erotica”. It was said that the King struggled with sexual performance and was gratified that Wallis — while working in a Chinese brothel in the 1920s — had learnt a technique known as the “Shanghai Grip”. This was not true, just a piece of misinformation seemingly spread by the security services to discredit Wallis. They already had her and Ernest under surveillance, suspecting them of being gold-diggers, Nazi sympathisers or both.

As for Wallis, she is essentially a spectator in the drama, as are all the women, including Edward’s mother, Queen Mary. “If only she were a respectable whore,” said Baldwin of Wallis, but that was unfair. Her preferred option appears to have been that she remained married to Ernest, of whom she was fond, while continuing to cuckold him. Edward rejected this on the grounds that “Mrs Simpson is a lady”, and it was he who drove — and funded — the divorce case, but she didn’t seem to have any objections.

“I miss you,” she wrote to Ernest as the storm broke. “Wasn’t life lovely, sweet and simple?” A future as the king’s mistress offered better prospects than being shackled to a petulant and possessive ex-royal in exile, and she was against abdication. “You goddamned fool!” she shouted at her lover, speaking on a tapped phone line from France, where she had fled after receiving death threats and a brick through her window. There is no indication that she reciprocated his love, let alone his devotion.

Even in company he would kneel to take off her shoes and paint her toenails

Edward’s one great moment as king was a two-day visit in November to south Wales, hard hit by the Depression, to draw attention to towns such as Merthyr Tydfil, where 60 per cent of adult men were unemployed. Evans sees the trip as the tipping point for Baldwin, who was now “resolved to get rid of the royal troublemaker”. At issue, she argues, was Edward’s visit to Dowlais, where the iron and steelworks had recently been closed and where he was reported as saying that “something must be done” for the men left behind. This was not just straying into political territory but potentially a personal embarrassment for the prime minister, whose family firm was part of the conglomerate that owned the redundant works.

That seems an unnecessary explanation for Baldwin’s perfectly explicable wish to protect the institution of monarchy. Nonetheless, the Welsh sections of this excellent book — dedicated to the author’s late father, who “remembered the day the King came to Abertillery” — provide a weighty counterpoint to the drawing-room discussions of the men in grey suits, a reminder of the country beyond. On the night he returned from the poverty of the valleys, Edward went to a private dinner that he insisted should be white tie, because, he said, he “approved of splendour”.

Alwyn Turner’s latest book is *A Shellshocked Nation: Britain Between the Wars* (Profile £25)

ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES

1936
The Year of Three Kings
by Sian Evans

Hodder & Stoughton
£28 pp416

The Duchess and Duke of Windsor in 1936. Below: rumours of the abdication hit the press in December 1936; Edward, then Prince of Wales, with the future Queen Elizabeth II, aged ten, in 1933

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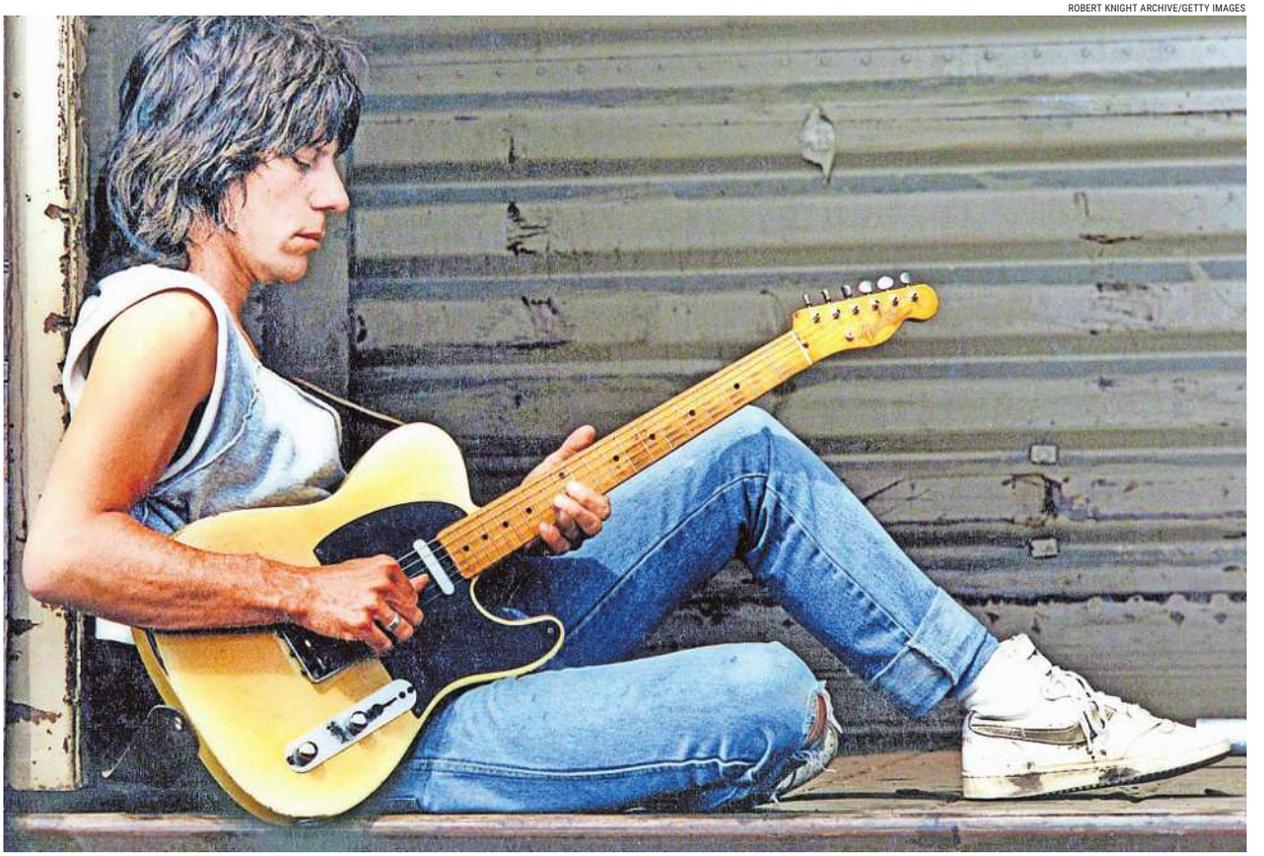
Talent, luck, success — and self-sabotage

This portrait of Jeff Beck, the 'guitarist's guitarist', reveals a raging, insecure man. By Victoria Segal

ROBERT KNIGHT ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



Jeff Beck playing his Fender Telecaster in 1985

In 1964 Jeff Beck was the guitarist in the Chiswick R&B group the Tridents when his bandmates' chatter alerted him to his competition on the booming British blues scene. "They were always talking about 'Eric Clapton this' and 'Eric Clapton that'," Beck tetchily recalled in later life. "I was pretty tired of that adulation for someone else. I was like 'F*** Eric Clapton'... *I'm your guitarist*.'"

Look at the back cover of *Blow by Blow*, Brad Tolinski and Chris Gill's admiring but astute study of the man Clapton called "Becky", and there's a string of glowing testimonials for the guitarist from David Gilmour, Nile Rodgers and Rod Stewart. Johnny Marr calls him "one of the all-time greats"; Paul McCartney — whose ragged, raga-like solo on the Beatles' *Taxman* was inspired by Beck's febrile playing — describes his volatile style as "something no one can match".

Yet *Blow by Blow* meticulously probes the complicated interplay between reputation, legacy and commercial success, slowly exposing why Beck became "the guitarist's guitarist", never quite matching the enduring cross-generational brand recognition of his chief rivals: Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, all of whom shadow him through these pages.

It's not as if Beck didn't have the ego for superstardom. In 1999 he explained why his 1975 instrumental jazz-fusion album *Blow by Blow* had been revelatory for him. "I found I really enjoyed having people clapping for me... when you have a lead singer, you don't know that. Unless you get a roar of approval during a guitar solo, you really don't know who they're clapping for. And of course we all wanted to be Billy Big Bananas back then."

Born on June 24, 1944, in Wallington, Surrey, Beck became obsessed with rock'n'roll after his hipster sister, Annetta, sent him to see *The Girl Can't Help It* at the Sutton Granada in the summer of 1957. He was entranced by the guitars of Gene Vincent's band, who featured in the film, immediately trying to build his own from fence posts, cigar boxes and rubber bands. Having set her brother on course, Annetta confirmed his trajectory by introducing him to Jimmy Page, who also grew up in Surrey, when they were both 16, the boys bonding over shared rock'n'roll tastes.

In 1965 Page — then a high-end session musician who played on everything from *Goldfinger* to *It's Not Unusual* — transformed Beck's life by recommending him to the forward-facing R&B visionaries the Yardbirds as a replacement for their blues-purist guitarist Clapton. (Beck thanked Page by giving him his 1959 Telecaster, later heard on Zeppelin's *Stairway to Heaven*).

When Beck arrived for his audition at the Marquee Club in London, he saw a van with "Keith" lipsticked over it and briefly entertained the fantasy he was actually trying out for the Rolling Stones. Instead of Richards, though, he found himself in front of Keith Relf, the Yardbirds' unhappy, one-lunged, inhaler-dependent singer. "Great, I'm joining an asthmatic blues band," Beck remembered wryly.

He embodied a certain kind of rock star: the country pile, the car collection, the shaggy hair

Blow by Blow
The Jeff Beck Story
by Brad Tolinski and Chris Gill

Michael Joseph £30 pp387

No matter how high Beck flew — and for a while the Yardbirds were so cutting-edge even Andy Warhol desired their company — this sense of drizzling disappointment and near-miss misadventure hangs over *Blow by Blow*. It's a portrait of a man who, despite his talent, luck and success, was never quite at ease. There were bouts of recurrent ill health — tonsillitis, headaches — and an unfortunate run of skull-fracturing accidents that left him with a superstitious fear of the date November 2.

But Beck's issues were far from all physical. He was constantly raging at equipment, cancelling tours, taking umbrage. Success annoyed him almost as much as lack of success. When, under the guidance of his manager Mickie Most, he had a huge solo hit in 1967 with *Hi Ho Silver Lining* he was appalled, later describing it as like wearing a "pink toilet seat round his neck".

Tolinski and Gill are great at tracking the music scene's jostle of male egos, the young men forging their way in postwar industry that allowed them reckless freedom. The authors are too high-minded to dwell on salacious on-the-road debauchery, but they acknowledge that Beck left his first wife, Patricia Brown, at home looking after their Afghan hound while he used his US tour with the Yardbirds to cavort with Mary Hughes, star of such upmarket cinematic classics as *The Ghost in the Invisible Bikini*.

There was a carelessness about Beck: while his bandmates invested their new wealth in grocery shops, the former mechanic and lifelong car obsessive blew it on a metallic blue Corvette. "But that's rock'n'roll, isn't it?" he said. As influential as his playing was, you suspect he also embodied a certain kind of rock star behaviour: the country pile, the car collection, the shaggy hair. No wonder many believe he inspired Christopher Guest's Nigel Tufnel in *This Is Spinal Tap*.

Edged out of the Yardbirds after one no-show and smashed guitar too many, his endless quest for collaborators began. When he formed the Jeff Beck Group with Ronnie Wood and Rod Stewart, their 1968 album *Truth* was a blazing precursor of the 1970s US heavy rock boom. Yet despite this blue-chip line-up, he became convinced he had been shut out of their friendship, describing Wood and Stewart as "giggling schoolgirls". His decision not to play Woodstock, meanwhile, left his bandmates equally disconsolate.

That cordite tang of self-sabotage lingered around Beck throughout. A trip to record at the Motown studio ends with him aggravating the house band; when the chance came to work with the Rolling Stones, he was appalled that he was not their only choice and irritated by their looseness. David Bowie invited him on stage for his final show as Ziggy Stardust but, fretful over his shoe choice, Beck demanded to be cut out of the tour film. There is a seeping sense of bathos, of a tragedy of being someone who needed the right people, but was doomed to get along with almost none of them.

Tolinski and Gill are former contributors to Guitar World but they largely restrict their discussions of "black-bobbin humbuckers" and "heavy gauge flatwound strings", keeping details of Beck's guitars to a fan-friendly appendix. Drawing on their multiple interviews with Beck, they maintain an agile narrative, giving readers the clues to pick up on the odd fragility at Beck's core, his wounded feeling that he was somehow overlooked and undervalued.

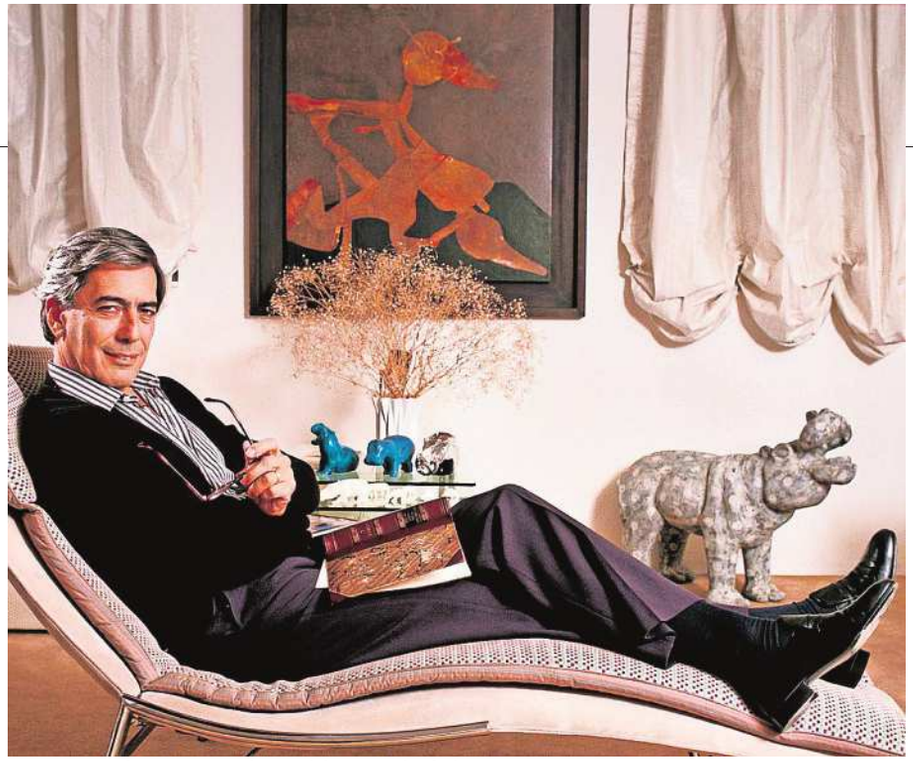
When the Yardbirds were inducted into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame in 1992 his speech veered towards the graceless. "I have done other music after the Yardbirds," he said, nudged to the microphone by Page. "Anyways, somebody told me I could be proud tonight. But I'm not because they kicked me out. They did. F*** them!"

Beck died in January 10, 2023, after contracting bacterial meningitis. His A-list funeral — mourners included Brian May, Kate Bush, Robert Plant, his new best friend Johnny Depp — undoubtedly proved his Billy Big Bananas status. *Blow by Blow* holds Beck in similarly high esteem, but it leaves the lingering sense that, despite his stellar career and the connoisseurs who know he is *their* guitarist, there could have been more silver linings.

books

Literature and lust — the crazy life of Mario

The priapic Peruvian Nobel laureate eloped with his aunt, then married his cousin.
By David Mills



CHRISTOPHER PILLITZ/GETTY IMAGES

Mario Vargas Llosa in 1986. Below: with his second wife, his cousin Patricia

Mario Vargas Llosa, the great Peruvian novelist and winner of the 2010 Nobel prize for literature, "spent a lifetime carefully not reading" Freud. Considering what went on in that lifetime, this was wise. His first ten years were spent in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in the household of his maternal grandparents with various uncles and aunts. With no father around, he slept in his mother's bed. One afternoon Aunt Olga went into labour. Vargas Llosa climbed a tree to watch the birth, but Aunt Julia made him come down before his new cousin Patricia appeared.

In 1947, when he was 11, his mother surprised him by taking him to meet the father he thought was dead. Vargas Llosa instantly disliked the paunchy, lower-class Ernesto Vargas and was even more unhappy when his reunited parents went on to a hotel, put their son in one room, locked themselves in another and had "enthusiastic and noisy sex". Vargas Llosa spent the entire day and following night alone, "close to vomiting with rage and fear and disgust".

Ernesto, worried that his son might be a "sissy", sent him to military school. Vargas Llosa took part in group masturbation activities, visited prostitutes and wrote erotic stories that his schoolmates would pay to have read to them while they masturbated. His talent for writing was such that, aged 15, he had a part-time job on a newspaper in Lima and was hanging out with criminal contacts in nightclubs. His father was unhappy about this so agreed that Vargas Llosa could move in with Uncle Lucho and Aunt Olga and their two daughters in Piura and go to school there. Sometimes he shared a room with Patricia, who by now was seven.

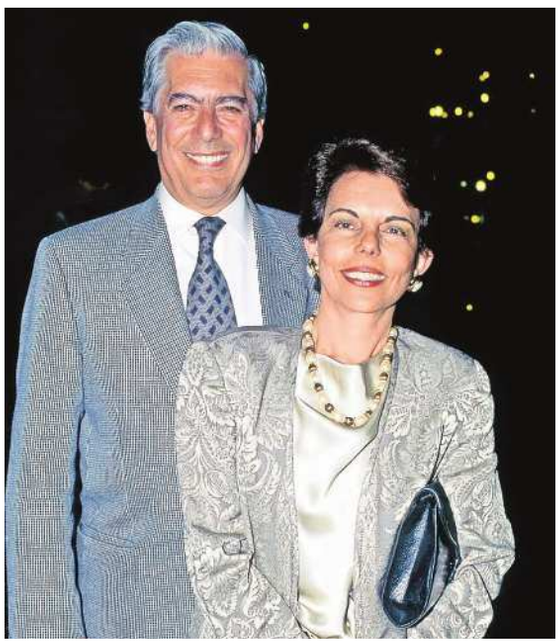
At 17 he was at San Marcos University reading law and being a communist. At 19 he was asked by Aunt Olga to chaperone her divorced sister Julia, who had moved back to Peru from Chile. Vargas Llosa eloped with his 29-year-old aunt. By this point in his life, his biographer Gerald Martin observes, Vargas Llosa had amassed "all the autobiographical experiences that he will use in his first five novels, and which will form the basis of his reputation".

While still a student, the teenage husband held down six jobs to support his wife until he won a grant to study in Spain, where he and Julia lived for a year before moving to Paris in 1959. There Vargas Llosa worked as a journalist while writing his first novel, *The Time of the Hero*. Patricia, now a tricky, pouty 15-year-old, and her older sister, Wanda, came to stay in Paris. Tensions were apparent in the marriage. In June 1962 the plane on which Wanda was flying back to Peru crashed in Guadeloupe. All on board were killed. Vargas Llosa flew out to identify the body.

Had Wanda been flying back to her parents to tell them that Vargas Llosa was having an affair with his teenage cousin Patricia? It was not clear to Julia whether their marriage had collapsed or not. Sometimes Vargas Llosa was loving, sometimes icy cold. The marriage limped on until finally, in May 1964, Vargas Llosa wrote Julia a letter to say he was leaving and that he loved Patricia. Had he been stringing his wife along for those years until his teenage lover was old enough? Vargas Llosa and Patricia married in May 1965: he was 29, his bride 19. The marriage lasted 50 years and produced three children.

During these early years Vargas Llosa was writing his greatest books. The first three novels in particular, *The Time of the Hero* (1963), *The Green House* (1966) and *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969), all set in Peru, were heavy, serious works tackling corrupt institutions and abuse of power through multiple perspectives and fragmented timeframes, with a psychological density influenced by William Faulkner.

The novels were garlanded with prizes and propelled Vargas Llosa into the public sphere. He was identified as one of the "Fab Four" of Latin-American magical realists along with the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, the Argentinian Julio Cortázar and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. García Márquez and Vargas Llosa became good friends. Yet Vargas Llosa was never really a magical realist and his direction of political travel was entirely opposite to the others. He headed to the right until, by the 1980s, he was openly supporting Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and running a neoliberal campaign for the presidency of Peru.



Mario Vargas Llosa
A Life
by Gerald Martin
Bloomsbury £35 pp848

His falling-out with García Márquez became public at a film premiere in February 1976. The cheery Colombian walked into the foyer, spread his arms and said, "Brother!" Vargas Llosa punched him in the face so hard that García Márquez crashed to the ground, semi-conscious. No one knows why he did it. Having interviewed everyone who was there, including the two protagonists (both refused to say anything), Martin has no answer beyond witnesses recalling Vargas Llosa saying, "That's for what you did to Patricia," or was it "said to Patricia"?

The first part of this biography is utterly brilliant, sharply insightful on the novels and incisive on the development of this singular man, but Martin, who has also written an admired biography of García Márquez, seems unable to cope with the latter half of Vargas Llosa's life. The book becomes odder, and finally rather bad.

By the 1970s Vargas Llosa's "acceptance of capitalist economics", the left-leaning academic says, had implications "of sheer practical inevitability". Instead of the years of "devastatingly hard labour and Flaubertian-Faulknerian high seriousness invested in each of his first three novels", his intellectual standing established, Vargas Llosa could instead toss off in a few months lighter comic novels with a heavy seasoning of sex, such as *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1977), which would be more popular and financially rewarding.

Periodically, Martin argues, the writer had to top up his intellectual capital by taking the time to produce something heavyweight — *The War of the End of the World* (1981), *The Feast of the Goat* (2000) — otherwise it was laughs and porn all the way.

Vargas Llosa emerges as a supremely selfish, entitled individual, solely focused on his writing and himself. Patricia was devoted to him, making his life as easy as possible despite his frequent affairs. He ran for the 1990 presidency in Peru thinking it was his for the taking, which it would have been had he bothered to put more effort in. As it was he won the first round, then decided it was beneath him. During the campaign he had an affair with his sister-in-law and published his tenth novel, *In Praise of the Stepmother* (1988), which tracked a course "from urbane eroticism to pornography and perversion".

Martin's problems with the Vargas Llosa of the later years stem from his inability to accept that conservatism is capable of artistic achievement, that it somehow meant the writer was "no longer able to write novels that creatively and organically incorporated visions different from his own". And while it is right to consider "American imperialism" towards Latin America, Martin's stridency becomes silly; he even declares that one self-publicising manoeuvre by Vargas Llosa displayed "his American can-do spirit, his Israeli chutzpah". This is grotesque and should have been removed.

Had he been stringing his wife along until his teenage lover was old enough to marry?

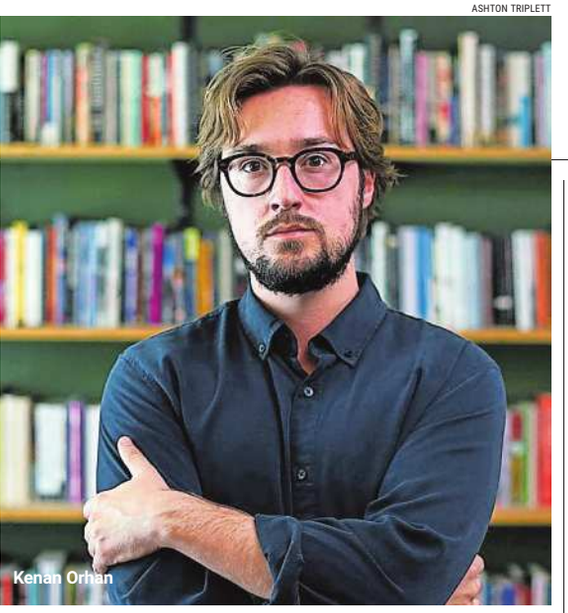
After 50 years of marriage to Patricia, Vargas Llosa, aged 79, in a final act of self-entitlement, dumped her for Isabel Preysler, a socialite and the former wife of Julio Iglesias. The relationship didn't end well and his books got worse. Martin calls *The Neighbourhood* (2016) "pathetic" and *Harsh Times* (2019) "the worst pages of Mario's I had ever read".

Vargas Llosa died aged 89 in April 2025. Better by far to remember his first novel, which changed "the face of fiction in the Spanish language", and that while "most great writers only write three or four truly great works, at most... Mario Vargas Llosa had written five great works and a brilliant comedy (*Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, 1973) by his mid-forties". It would be a good idea to stop reading this biography at that point too.

When your new bathroom becomes a Turkish prison cell

An immigrant couple's home improvement takes a turn for the weird in this unusual Booker-longlisted debut. By Laura Hackett

ASHTON TRIPLETT



Kenan Orhan

Dilara and her husband know they are stretching their finances by having the bathroom redone, but they think it will be worth it. They want to make it accessible for her father, who has Alzheimer's and has recently moved in with them. If they can smuggle in a waterfall shower and a marble bench while they're at it, what's the harm?

But when the builders finally depart Dilara discovers instead "the perfect tableau of a prison cell". There are bars, a metal bed, a contraption that is both a sink and a lavatory, and even a guard, who is just as horrified as Dilara to find her there. Even weirder, "it was modelled on Silivri prison in Istanbul".

This is particularly worrying for Dilara, because her little family have recently fled Turkey thanks to Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly intolerant regime. Now in their newly adopted home in Italy, it seems that the regime is following them. When Dilara's husband (unnamed throughout the book) discovers the prison cell, he panics — "this must have been some new development by the interior ministry to hunt down political enemies" — and runs away, leaving her alone with her ailing father, and with no source of income.

As their money dwindles, Dilara and her father subsist on porridge; while he becomes angry and confused, she finds her time taken up with "grotesque rituals of decay". In the midst of this upsetting reality, she begins retreating to the "comforting quiet of my prison", which is, it turns out, a kind of portal into the real Silivri prison. The cells around her fill up with women who are clearly not criminals: journalists like Zeynep, or just outspoken girls like Müge. For these women, the idea of their cells as a retreat from life is laughable and Dilara hides the fact that she can walk back into her Italian apartment whenever she pleases.

But the prison is more than an escape from her caring duties; Dilara, we discover, is terribly homesick for Istanbul. In her cell she can "taste the hints of brine and juniper trees in the air", can "almost see the hills of the old city, fat with ancient domes bubbling over them".

So what's going on here? What kind of book are we in? Is Dilara, like her father, losing her mind? Has she imagined the prison cell? Or is it really there, marking out the novel as a magical realist venture? Apart from the lyrical descriptions of Istanbul, *The Renovation* reads more like a Kafkaesque dystopia, as Dilara attempts to complain to the building contractor about her ruined bathroom (he blocks her number) and find a job (her career as a school psychologist is of little use here).

The Renovation
by Kenan Orhan
Hamish Hamilton
£16.99 pp256

Kenan Orhan is Turkish-American and lives in Kansas. Like his collection of short stories, *I Am My Country*, *The Renovation* centres on his Turkish heritage. Leaving your homeland, we discover, is a series of constant losses, like the mental degeneration experienced by Dilara's father. But it is also a cell that follows you around, a prison of your past that you can never leave behind. "Exile," Dilara realises, "is an abusive relationship." Even when you run away, "your homeland reaches out a cruel hand and injures you again".

The premise is inventive, the symbolism astute, the prose clean and neat and frequently beautiful (when Dilara's father forgets the name of a political party, it is "as if the grain of sand on which this information was written had fallen out of his ear"). But *The Renovation* is missing something. When I read Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*, or Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, I can feel the characters' homesickness seeping through the pages. In his debut novel, which was longlisted for the Booker prize last month, Orhan tells us how awful it is to leave your home behind. He even shows us, in the form of a bathroom renovation gone wrong. But he stops short of making me feel it.

Come into the shadows, it's very strange here

A chance encounter, a magic lantern and dazzling optical illusions: this Booker-nominated novel is a beguiling, freewheeling read. By James Bailey

In *Dialogue with a Somnambulist*, a short story by the Mexican-American-British author Chloe Aridjis, an unnamed narrator follows a plastic bag blown by a "mysterious current" through the streets of Berlin. The bag delivers her to a dive bar, where goggle-eyed monsters — the scrap-metal sculptures of a punk collective known as the Dead Chickens — leer at her with "amusement park tongues". How might these "mechanical grotesques" communicate with one another, the narrator wonders, if they were alive? "With a twilight language," she supposes, "used to obscure rather than illuminate."

A member of the Dead Chickens makes a fleeting appearance in Aridjis's tender and freewheeling fourth novel, Booker-longlisted *The Shadow of the Object*. The lone punk emerges at a sale held at the home of Wilhelmina Blau, a German widow with a vast collection of "pre-cinema toys and instruments", including shadow puppets, peep boxes, daguerreotypes and zoetropes.

He is hunting for items that might be used as body parts, he announces, for his gang's "modern creations". "*Überhaupt nicht*," Wilhelmina huffs ("Absolutely not"), her words sending the Dead Chicken back into the darkness.

The Shadow of the Object
by Chloe Aridjis
Chatto & Windus
£16.99 pp192

Chloe Aridjis

It is fitting, in this deceptively slim book of half-glimpsed figures and tricks of the light, that we are introduced to Wilhelmina as an "intriguing silhouette". She is "a hybrid of woman and chair", the novel's narrator, Flora, comments, on noticing her in a wheelchair in a hospital corridor. A peculiar force, like that which propels the plastic bag in Aridjis's short story, has brought the two women together in this Mexico City hospital.

Flora is there after being bitten by the family alsatian, who took against the sight of her "disembodied hand" emerging from a gloomy corner of the living room. Wilhelmina, meanwhile, is being treated for pneumonia; she found herself unable to breathe shortly after being "pulled into the orbit" of a sculpture of a fang-baring heart while visiting the Museum of Anthropology.

Wilhelmina has not come to the hospital empty-handed, however. She has with her a magic lantern, which she uses to flood the building with a procession of dazzling images: a Prussian blue hare with "diaphanous ears"; a trio of black gondolas slicing through turquoise water; the chartreuse head of Medusa, alive with snakes.

The light show turns out to be Wilhelmina's swansong. In the weeks that follow, Flora is tasked with returning the lantern to Wilhelmina's adult son, with whom she cultivates a relationship as slippery and mercurial as the novel. She returns to her job as a silver polisher in the basement of a jeweller's. "Polishing," she remarks cryptically, "is not an art to be taken lightly."

Like one of the mechanical monsters in *Dialogue with a Somnambulist*, *The Shadow of the Object* seems at first to speak in a "twilight language" designed to obscure rather than illuminate. Stay in the dark for long enough, though, and your eyes begin to adjust. From one short chapter to the next, Aridjis looks deeply and patiently at the quotidian world until it starts to gleam, as if freshly polished, with new meaning.

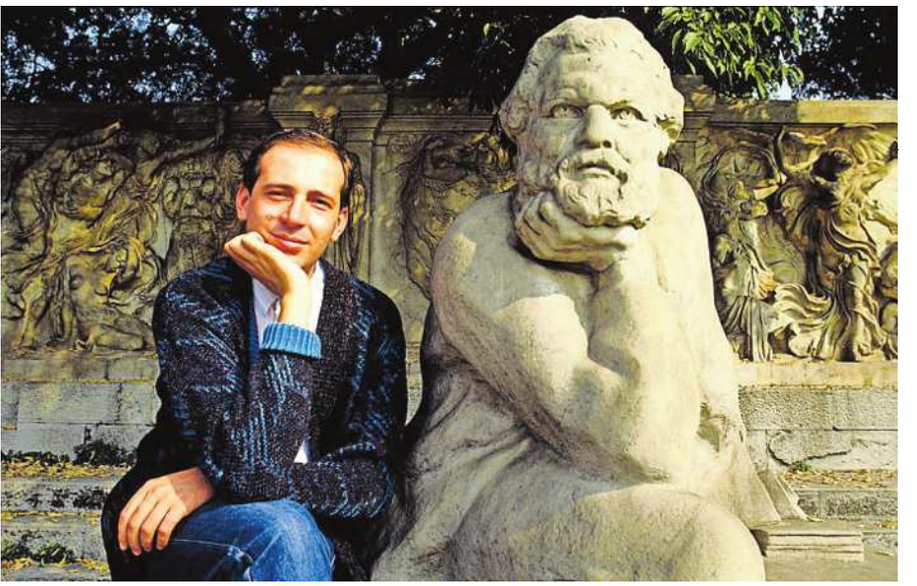
There is great pleasure to be had in observing the world through Flora's eyes, whether this involves seeing dishes stacked in piles like "precarious accordions", or watching a skittering spider perform its "twitchy calligraphy" on the white surface of a pillow. Wilhelmina's optical illusions, one character remarks, "held the grammar of everything that is possible", a grammar that Flora appears to have inherited.

Aridjis looks deeply and patiently at the quotidian world until it starts to gleam

Not everything dazzles. An offbeat vignette told from the perspective of a museum-dwelling mouse veers perilously close to twee, for instance, while Flora's colleagues remain thinly drawn throughout. These flaws aside, *The Shadow of the Object* is a beguiling tale of loss and connection that rewards readers content to pause and admire the view.

In the end it is not one of Wilhelmina's extraordinary projections that lingers longest in the mind but the image of a snail-shaped ring on Flora's finger. The snail's awkwardly protruding head "would often catch on things," we are told, "as though asking the world to slow down".

books



ALBERTO ROVERI/MONDADORI/GETTY IMAGES

Pier Vittorio Tondelli in the 1980s

Sun, sea and excess — it's an Eighties Italian bonkbuster

This rediscovered novel with a killer vintage soundtrack screams 'summer reading'. By John Self

Not many books scream "summer reading" as loudly as the cover of this novel. The bright colours, sea view and image of two cigarettes smouldering in a heart-shaped ashtray make it look like an Eighties bonkbuster set in sun-soaked climes. And that's partly what it is: *Rimini* was published in 1985 in Italian, but has never appeared in English until now. Its author, Pier Vittorio Tondelli, wrote five novels, including *Separate Rooms* (which was reissued and optioned for film last year), before his death in 1991 from an Aids-related illness.

The story takes place in the steamy summer of 1983 ("the air was stifling, and it was barely June"), when the young Italian journalist Marco Bauer is sent by his editor to Rimini to write a newspaper supplement on life on the "Adriatic Riviera". Rimini is a resort growing in popularity, which to Marco is "the geographic expression of cheap, popular holidays, a symbol of chaos and congestion".

When he gets there Marco soaks up the fashions, the colours and the sweaty smells of the Eighties. Rimini is a party town, one local tells him: "Day and night, you'll find someone to have fun with, whatever your... inclinations might be." And sure enough, there's a lot of fun and a lot of inclinations as the story shovels in other characters.

There are Roberto and Toni, a screenwriter and a film director trying to raise funds to make a film; they just need "thirty thousand raging lunatics willing to part with their money". There's Beatrix, a German woman who is in town looking for her missing sister Claudia after she finds naked photos in Claudia's abandoned diary.

And the way the story usually comes to life is through sex. Roberto is reduced to dropping his pants for a woman who will donate to his film if she can see him naked, while Toni enjoys sex with a woman with a "great ass [...] If only she hadn't kept chewing that f***ing gum throughout". Beatrix takes a lift with a dodgy taxi driver and regrets it, while Alberto, a travelling musician, has a holiday affair, full of intimate yet acrobatic tussles, with a lonely wife.

There's a lot of that sort of thing in *Rimini*, which you may take as a selling point rather than a warning. It's hard to know, however, whether *Rimini* is satirising retrograde sexist hokum or enacting it. When Marco leaves Milan for Rimini, he says goodbye to his girlfriend, Katy, whose entire character is that "she's always up for it". And he doesn't miss her for long, once he gets to the Rimini office and meets his new colleague Susy and her "pair of knockout tits". Needless to say, it's not long before Marco and Susy are having the sort of pornographic sex that we haven't seen since the heyday of Shirley Conran or Jackie Collins. ("Her thighs would miraculously fall open, the curls parting like tendrils of a carnivorous plant when it senses prey is nearby.")

Still, there's something for all tastes here. We meet a novelist named Bruno who is still smarting after the loss of an old boyfriend, Aelred, and his reminiscences give us some steamy gay sex too.

Is there more to *Rimini*? Yes — although not all of it works. The Bruno and Aelred storyline has attempts at emotional closure, but Tondelli never gives it the drama or depth it deserves. Better is the line running through the book about the death of a politician, which leads Marco away from his holiday supplement and into harder reporting involving gambling dens and a land dispute, and which takes the novel to a thrillerish conclusion. When Marco finds an apparent suicide note, his journalistic instincts kick in — he keeps it from the police until it's too late for rival newspapers to include it in tomorrow's paper.

Best of all, the book comes with Tondelli's soundtrack to play while you read, which will be catnip to anyone who remembers the chequered decade. It includes not only the obvious contenders — Duran Duran, Cyndi Lauper, Talking Heads — but ones that could only have been chosen at the time because they are largely overlooked now. Remember Matt Bianco, the Psychedelic Furs and the Style Council? Now that's what I call the Eighties.

Rimini
by Pier Vittorio Tondelli, trans. Elena Pala
Sceptre £20 pp384

Rereading The Sandcastle by Iris Murdoch

A fusty middle-aged teacher falls for a young artist in this chastely lovelorn tale. By Sam Corbett

It was with surprise and a little concern that I recently considered a list of my literary heroes and discovered that almost all of them were rampant adulterers. I don't mean the authors (although no doubt many of them were guilty too), I mean Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Molly Bloom, Dick Diver and Bill Mor. Not one of them kept their vows.

Having hastily put aside the possibility that this pattern says anything about me, I've decided that the reason we find these characters fascinating is that we end up knowing them more profoundly than we would have had they remained true. The pleasing thing about affairs (in literature, I should stress) is that they allow us to see not only who a character is but also who they wish themselves to be.

Iris Murdoch's books are teeming with good examples of this, but Bill Mor, the protagonist of her understated third novel, *The Sandcastle*, is one of the most compelling. Mor is a middle-aged teacher who lives with his family in a semi-rural commuter town. But Mor wants more from life.

His dream is to move to London and become an MP, but Nan, his imperious wife, won't hear of it. A parliamentary bid would mean giving up on his teaching job and he has two children to support. So for the time being Mor is stuck where he is, listening to the sound of the traffic whooshing back and forth between London and the coast and wondering if he'll ever be able to afford a car.

Into this stultifying scene falls Rain Carter, a young artist commissioned to paint a portrait of the school's recently retired headmaster. Rain is creative and impulsive, drives an expensive Riley and is young enough to be Mor's daughter. Naturally Mor falls in love with her.

The premise is less groundbreaking than Murdoch's other works and when it was published in 1957 some reviewers were sniffy about having to read yet another novel set in a public school. But just as a chef might be best judged by how they cook a simple French omelette, so the truest test of Murdoch's talent can be found in her handling of this most familiar of recipes. What she comes up with is really very good.

The book's beating heart is the drab but loveable Mor. At first glance he's just another of Murdoch's middle-aged adolescents, but while characters such as Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, the Sea* or Jake Donaghue in *Under the Net* never grew up, Mor is a man who did mature but finds himself reversing course.

His gradual regression from a fusty Latin teacher to a hopeless, lovelorn beau is undeniably charming, and the affair, once it gets going, is actually chaste. Mor and Rain behave less like ravenous teenagers than like two children who have just held hands on the playground for the first time and are unsure of what to do next.

While the reader may be taken in by their romantic naiveties, Murdoch, the moral philosopher, is not. Her voice appears in the mouths of Mor's colleagues, who expound on inconvenient subjects such as moral responsibility and empathy in his presence. "Who is worthy to understand another person?" one of them asks. "When we look upon a human face, we interpret it by what we are ourselves." This short homily, ostensibly about portraiture, should land sharply for Mor, who believes he understands Nan and Rain but truthfully understands neither.

The Sandcastle is not a straightforward moral parable, however. For a start, anyone who has picked up a biography of Murdoch will be conscious that Mor's extramarital adventures pale in comparison to those of his author. And Murdoch frequently distorts *The Sandcastle*'s moral framework by scattering omens, curses and other occult forces through its pages.

Bill Mor's extramarital adventures pale in comparison to those of his author

There are the phantasmal appearances of the mute woodcutter, for instance, which always presage a disaster, or the witchy rituals performed by Mor's daughter. In one disturbing moment she and her brother play "tears of blood" — a game in which they cut the skin beneath their eyes and weep until the blood runs down their cheeks. It's a very Murdochian detail, the kind that hits you, just as you were starting to relax, like a switch to the back of the knees.

When the affair comes to a head, Murdoch wrings some brilliantly tense scenes out of her small array of characters. But while I won't reveal what happens to Mor, Nan and Rain, it doesn't occur anywhere near train tracks, or the arsenic cupboard. Mor is not a Karenina or a Bovary, he is a Mor, and his story's ending is suitably subtle and Mor-like.

For the more libidinous reader, there are certainly Murdoch protagonists who get around more, whose passions are more fiery and who leave more destruction in their wake. But Mor, over his single, faltering affair, reveals so much more about himself. For that reason he has earned his place on my list of favourites, alongside all those other titans of faithlessness.

bestsellers

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"He has a heart of ice... but for her, he'd burn the world."

Oooh. Juxtaposition. Very nice. Ana Huang's *Twisted* series, romance novels that follow the Colleen Hoover formula of pairing a damaged-but-deadly-attractive alpha male with a zesty, free-spirited female love interest, are clogging up the hardback fiction list. The first one, *Twisted Love*, was published in 2021 but all four are back in the charts, thanks to some cannily produced collector's editions from the publisher, Piatkus, featuring decorated page edges and gold foil.

Meanwhile, one hot new author continues to dominate paperback non-fiction: three editions of *The Odyssey*, plus *The Iliad*, new in at No 6. When you've finished with Huang, why not move on to Homer?

Paperback Fiction

1 (2) The Correspondent **Virginia Evans** *Penguin £9.99*
2 (1) My Husband's Wife **Alice Feeney** *Pan £9.99*
3 (new) Daybreak **Autumn Woods** *Pan £10.99*
4 (6) Odyssey **Stephen Fry** *Penguin £10.99*
5 (4) The Names **Florence Knapp** *Phoenix £9.99*
6 (3) Sunstruck **William Rayfet Hunter** *Penguin £9.99*
7 (8) The Eights **Joanna Miller** *Penguin £9.99*
8 (5) The Artist **Lucy Steeds** *John Murray £10.99*
9 (new) Bury Our Bones in the Midnight Soil **VE Schwab** *Tor £10.99*
10 (9) It's Not What You Think **Clare Mackintosh** *HarperCollins £9.99*

Hardback Fiction

1 (1) May We Feed the King **Rebecca Perry** *Granta £14.99*
2 (new) A Snake Among Swans **Hannah Kaner** *HarperVoyager £20*
3 (3) Yesteryear **Caro Claire Burke** *4th Estate £16.99*
4 (new) One of Us Is Guilty **Steve Cavanagh** *Headline £16.99*
5 (new) Twisted Love **Ana Huang** *Piatkus £25*
6 (8) The Things We Never Say **Elizabeth Strout** *Viking £18.99*
7 (new) Twisted Hate **Ana Huang** *Piatkus £25*
8 (new) Twisted Games **Ana Huang** *Piatkus £25*
9 (new) Twisted Lies **Ana Huang** *Piatkus £25*
10 (6) Dungeon Crawler Carl **Matt Dinniman** *Michael Joseph £22*

Paperback Non-fiction

1 (1) The Odyssey **Homer, trans. Emily Wilson** *Norton £14.99*
2 (3) Murdoku Volume 1 **M Garand** *Penguin £16.99*
3 (2) Mother Mary Comes to Me **Arundhati Roy** *Penguin £12.99*
4 (4) The Odyssey **Homer, trans. EV & DCH Rieu** *Penguin £9.99*
5 (6) Careless People **Sarah Wynn-Williams** *Pan £10.99*
6 (new) The Iliad **Homer, trans. Emily Wilson** *Norton £14.99*
7 (9) Crossing the Wine-Dark Sea **Emily Wilson** *Profile £12.99*
8 (8) Murdoku Volume 2: Back in Time **M Garand** *Penguin £16.99*
9 (new) The Odyssey **Homer, trans. TE Lawrence** *Fontana £9.99*
10 (–) The Longest Walk Home **Ray Bailey & David Wilkins** *Quercus £12.99*

Hardback Non-fiction

1 (new) How Lucky Am I **Christian Watson** *Ebury £20*
2 (1) The Odyssey **Homer, trans. EV & DCH Rieu** *Penguin Classics £18.99*
3 (2) London Falling **Patrick Radden Keefe** *Picador £22*
4 (5) BBQ **Jamie Oliver** *Michael Joseph £30*
5 (new) A Biological War: A Scenario **Annie Jacobsen** *Torva £22*
6 (4) Regime Change **Jonathan Swan & Maggie Haberman** *Simon & Schuster £28*
7 (3) The Land and Its People **David Sedaris** *Abacus £20*
8 (9) Things I Told My Notes App **Milly Goldsmith** *Bantam £16.99*
9 (new) Witchland: A Tale of Witch Hunting and War in 17th-Century Britain **Marion Gibson** *Simon & Schuster £22*
10 (9) The Let Them Theory **Mel Robbins** *Hay House £22.99*

Waterstones THE NUMBER IN PARENTHESES REPRESENTS CHART POSITIONS LAST WEEK. DATA SUPPLIED BY AND COPYRIGHT TO WATERSTONES FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 1

children's book of the week

A hell of a read for the easily distracted. By Lucy Bannerman

Bone Head is a deluded minion who longs for a promotion. Or as his long-suffering supervisor, Mort, puts it: "A hopeless rookie with ideas above his station." They're both skeletons, charged with guarding one of the many gates to the Underworld.

When Bone Head accidentally reduces much of the realm to smoking rubble — he really should have read that manual explaining why you should never poke the blue frogs that spew acid vomit — Hades is furious. (His mum is coming round and he wants his fortress to look much better than his brother's flash pad at Mount Olympus.) Hades banishes the pair to the kennels and demotes them to the worst job in Hell: dog sitting his beloved, three-headed hellhound, Cerberus.

"It's quite nice really," I [Bone Head] said, scanning the room now that the hellfires had risen and I could see our new living quarters clearly. "LOOK, the previous dog sitters left some lovely artwork on the walls." On closer inspection, it was mostly messages

Bone Head
Guardian of the Underworld
by Jamie Gregory (7+)
Scholastic £7.99 pp256

Jamie Gregory

crying for help and lines marking the days they'd survived, or maybe it was hours. It's hard to say but it certainly gave the room some character."

The drawing is superb and the story itself is lots of fun — they lose the dog and poor, long-suffering Mort gradually loses bones until he's just a skull on a stick ("the humiliation!") — but the joy of *Bone Head* is in its lively format. Paragraphs are skewed at jaunty angles and sparring lead characters' voices are colour-coded. It's meant to be Bone Head's diary but Mort warns readers that it's "exaggerated, flawed, self-indulgent rubbish!" As Bone Head tells his misguided tales in a large, black font, Mort interrupts with his own sarcastic commentary in arsenic green. He crosses out text and corrects the story, spluttering things from the sidelines, like, "YOU THINK?" and "You really are an embarrassment to our species".

This is a starter bike of a book; it feels like learning to read with stabilisers. It's unlikely to impress the kind of adults who claim they were reading *Tristram Shandy* before they could shave but for easily distracted readers building their confidence with chapter books, it's bound to be a winner.

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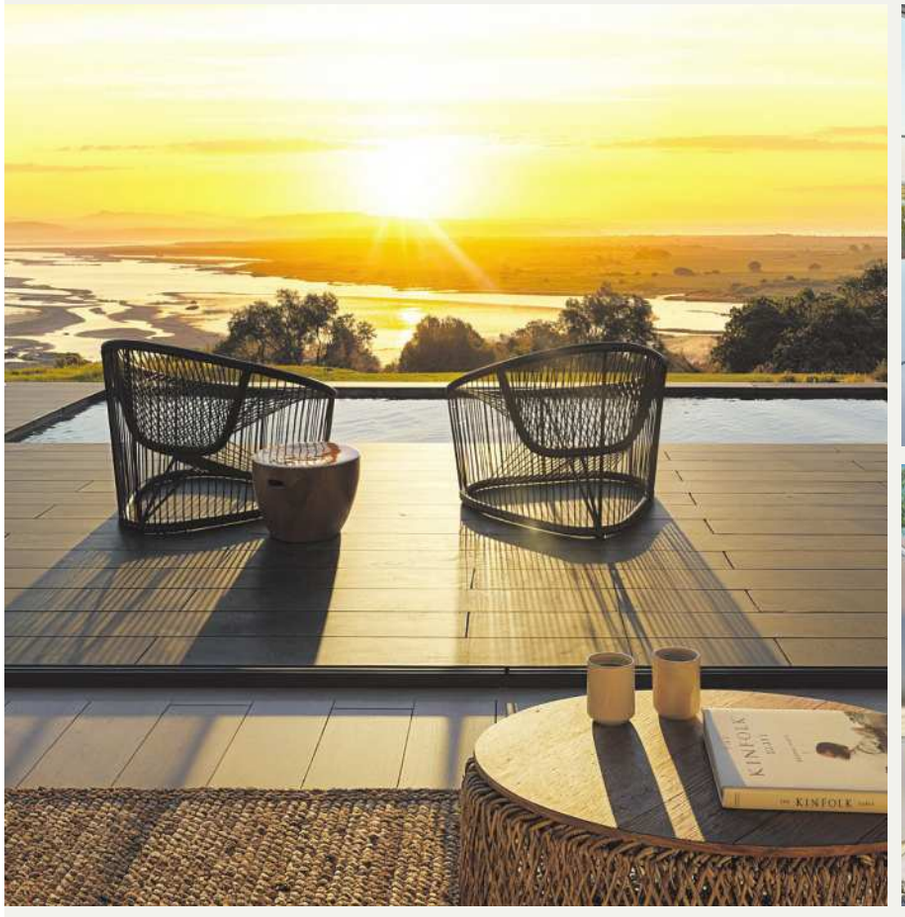

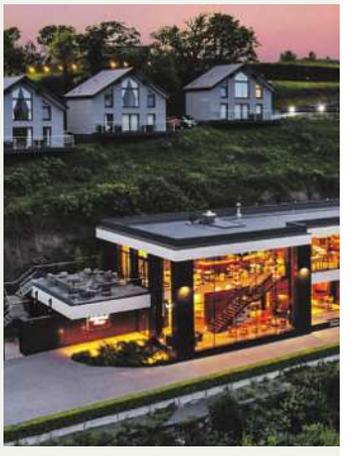

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Television & Radio

Your seven-day guide to film, streaming and more

August 8-14

TV column Page 21 / **Streaming** Pages 22-24
Best sport Page 25 / **Film guide** Pages 26-27
TV listings Pages 28-41 / **Radio** Pages 42-43

My trip into the past

A House Through Time

David Olusoga's series returns to tell the story of an Edinburgh house through the people who lived there
Thursday, BBC2, 9pm

RICHARD RANKEN/BBC

Best of the week

FILM

1 Hamnet

The acclaimed film about Shakespeare's family tragedy, starring Jessie Buckley
Sky/Now, from Friday

DOCUMENTARY

2 Murder Trial: Death of a Dog Walker

The court case of a man accused of murdering a Perthshire groundsman
Wednesday, BBC2, 9pm

STREAMING

3 My Brilliant Career

Fun new drama about the dilemmas of a young woman in Australia in 1900
Netflix, from Thursday

PODCAST

4 The Bare Necessities

A Radio 4 series offering practical tips about how to survive an apocalypse
James Marriott, page 25

SPORT

5 European Athletics Championships

Keely Hodgkinson and Dina Asher-Smith are among the Team GB competitors
BBC1 & BBC2, Monday-Friday, 10.30am/8pm & 7pm

TV Talk

By Ben Dowell

Has Strictly run out of stars?

With bullying allegations and claims of drug use on set, it seems that celebrity agents may have been nervous in putting their clients forward for the new series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, because the line-up (so far) for this autumn's series is looking unusually lacklustre. The dog trainer Graeme Hall, anyone? The celebrity stylist Chris Appleton? The 2025 *Love Island* male champion Cach Mercer? I have at least heard of Lacey Turner (*EastEnders*), Dani Dyer and Jaime Winstone. So with 12 announced at the time of writing, there should be three more names to come. Here's hoping they're saving the best till last.

From Darling Buds to dead hitmen

I'm old enough to remember Catherine Zeta-Jones, *above*, as Mariette in *The Darling Buds of May*. Since then she has married a Hollywood superstar and made a name for herself in films such as *Chicago*. Now she is in Prime Video's upcoming revenge thriller *Kill Jackie*, based on the bestselling novel *The Price You Pay* by Aidan Truhen (the pseudonym of Nick Harkaway, the son of John le Carré). She plays Jackie Price, a former international drug smuggler whose quiet life as a fine-art dealer is disturbed when hitmen show up at her door.

David E Kelley's bonfire is still alight

The king of glossy melodrama David E Kelley is planning an adaptation of Tom Wolfe's 1987 satire on Wall Street hubris, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. To be directed by Matt Reeves (*The Batman*), the project had been in development with Apple TV, but is now being touted elsewhere. Kelley, who oversaw Netflix's adaptation of Wolfe's *A Man in Full*, is suitably bullish about its chances. Well, it is a story about people who believe they are masters of the universe.

A moustache-trembler for Poirot

Filming is about to begin in Liverpool on *Hercule*, the new BBC Poirot series, with Tamsin Greig and Jack Gleeson (Joffrey from *Game of Thrones*) joining the cast. The creators have revealed that the six-parter will "centre around three of Christie's early stories, while also introducing Hercule Poirot to future friends and allies and one particular nemesis". Racking my little grey cells, I suspect that is Countess Vera Rossakoff — the beautiful Russian jewel thief Poirot developed a moustache-quivering crush on.

tvtalk@thetimes.co.uk

Don't keep them to yourself, share your favourite hidden gems (and those shows to avoid)

My favourite music on TV lately? Prog rock at the Proms (iPlayer) – so much nostalgia and great to see Carl Palmer on the drums for *Fanfare for the Common Man*! **Bob Smythe**

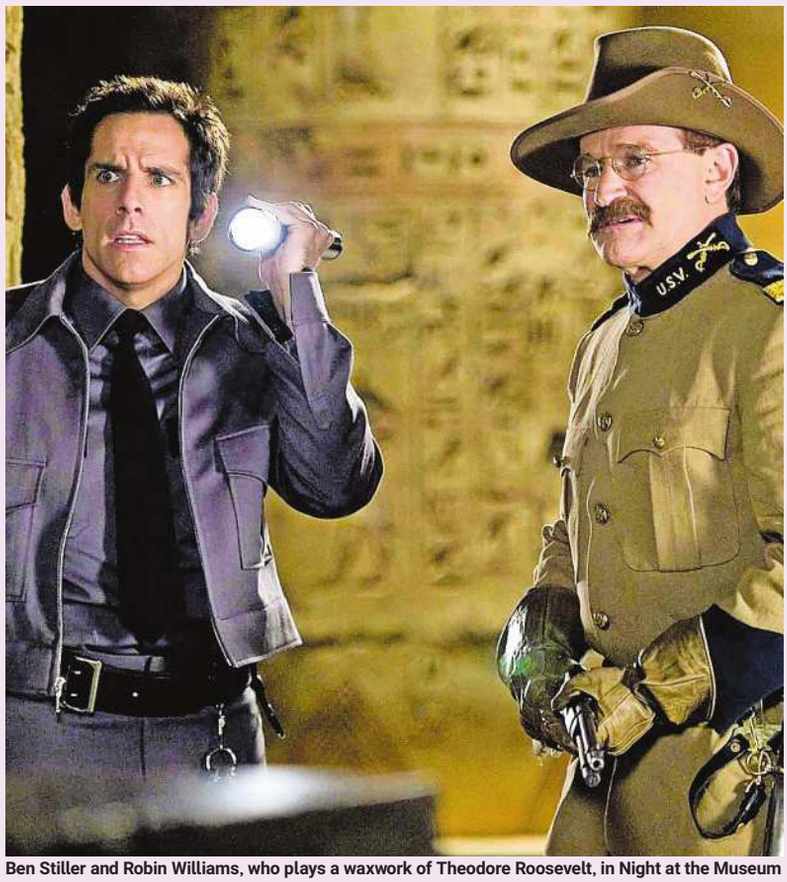
I've started renaming *Mastermind* as *Myriemind* in honour of Clive Myrie's opening speech in each episode of the quiz show. They get better every week. **Johnny Lapworth**

Watching the Commonwealth Games on TNT made me realise how superb the BBC coverage of such events is. The commentators were out of their depth, many resorting to trite waffle. **Melanie Lloyd**

The coverage of the Commonwealth Games on normal telly was disappointing: just an hour of highlights on Channel 5 at 10pm. Surely we could have managed without a repeat of *Car Pound Cops* and had it on at 7pm. **Glyn Thomas**

Oh no, how wrong can you be with your assessment of the most-loved TV prequels [July 25]. Placing *Endeavour* at fourth? Never. It was and will continue to be the best, the very, very best. **J Pulman**

In Carol Midgley's review of *Benidorm Is Murder* [Aug 1] she suggested that Fake That would be a better name for a Take That tribute band. I'm sure I'm not the first to point out that a tribute band with that name already exists! **Janette Folker**



Ben Stiller and Robin Williams, who plays a waxwork of Theodore Roosevelt, in Night at the Museum

the top ten

Free family films

These classic movies are all available over the holidays

Let us know your suggestions at tvtalk@thetimes.co.uk

Night at the Museum iPlayer

Ben Stiller headlines this entertaining movie, which hinges on a silly but delightful premise: the entire contents of New York's Natural History Museum comes to life every night when the security guard Larry Daley (Stiller) locks the doors. Prepare for a chaotic pursuit through the halls involving a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton, Attila the Hun and a miniature Roman general played by Steve Coogan. This has plenty of laughs for kids — and knowing humour for parents.

Shrek collection iPlayer

Warning: your kids may spend the rest of the summer singing Smash Mouth's version of *I'm a Believer* after watching this movie marathon about a grumpy, loveable ogre (Mike Myers) who goes from swamp-dwelling loner to reluctant king of Far Far Away, and his sidekick Donkey (Eddie Murphy). Sharp fairytale spoofs and genuine heart make this a rewatch perfect for every age.

Harry Potter collection ITVX

With the eagerly awaited HBO television series on the horizon, it is a great time to revisit the cinematic journey of the boy wizard. Watch Daniel Radcliffe's Harry grow from nervous first-year to battle-hardened hero, with his friends, teachers (Michael Gambon, Alan Rickman, Robbie Coltrane and Maggie Smith) and the occasional naughty house-elf along the way. Once you've completed the movie marathon, dive into the prequel series *Fantastic Beasts*, also on ITVX.

The Simpsons Movie Channel 4 streaming

After the phenomenal success of the television series during the Nineties and the early 21st century, it's remarkable that it took producers until 2007 to create a big-screen version of Springfield. And in the first (and to date, only) feature Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie didn't disappoint, in a rip-roaring adventure where the residents of the town are trapped under a glass dome after Homer's reckless actions.

It took The Simpsons 18 years to make it to the big screen

Paw Patrol: The Movie Channel 4 streaming

If you have young children in the house you'll be more than familiar with the antics of Ryder and the pups. In this big-screen outing the gang find themselves called to Adventure City to stop the dastardly Mayor Humdinger from wreaking havoc on the residents. This could be the biggest challenge yet for Rubble, Marshall, Skye and co.

Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers iPlayer

When in doubt you can't beat an Aardman animation for keeping the kids entertained — and the series of films featuring Wallace and Gromit are among the finest. In this 1993 caper Wallace (Peter Sallis) and his trusty dog Gromit find themselves in trouble after they attract the ire of their evil penguin lodger, Feathers McGraw, who uses Wallace's techno trousers to pull off a daring diamond heist and leave our protagonists in trouble.

Robot Dreams Channel 4 streaming

Written and directed by Pablo Berger, this charming independent animated tragicomedy tells the story of the unusual friendship between an anthropomorphic labrador retriever and a robot living in New York in 1985. The Spanish-French co-production, which has no dialogue, was nominated for best animated feature at the 2024 Academy Awards.

Jurassic Park ITVX

For more than three decades Steven Spielberg's spellbinding dinosaur film has been entertaining families across the world. So whether it's your first time or your hundredth, why not enjoy Richard Attenborough, Sam Neill, Jeff Goldblum and Laura Dern at the top of their games as all hell is unleashed on a remote island when a weekend away at a dinosaur park goes very, very wrong.

Superman iPlayer

Long before Milly Alcock was Supergirl, Henry Cavill sported the famous suit and Dean Caine was a young Superman there was Christopher Reeve. The 1978 superhero film is a classic, with a superb central performance from Reeve. It formed the blueprint for many of the successful superhero franchises of the modern era and deserves a rewatch.

Horrible Histories: The Movie — Rotten Romans iPlayer

Prepare for your children to emerge from this viewing with a detailed, gleeful knowledge of just how stomach-churning Roman sanitation was. Featuring a stellar line-up of British comic talent including Lee Mack and Nick Frost, the film captures the silly spirit and enthusiasm that made the television series a hit, culminating in a chaotic showdown at the Battle of Watling Street.

Carol Midgley on TV

Ted Lasso tackles women's football — with a few own goals

This feelgood hit is such uplifting TV, I can forgive the tweeness — especially after watching Ricky Gervais's sweary cat cartoon

Ted Lasso
Apple TV

Alley Cats
Netflix

Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis) is lured back to the UK, where he beats Alice Chilton (Tanya Reynolds) to the women's head coach role

Do you know why women's football took so long to take off? It was hard to persuade 11 women to wear the same outfit. Boom boom. Female footballers have presumably heard all the lame sexist banter, but they are about to hear a lot more in the new series of *Ted Lasso*.

It takes this ball and runs with it after Ted (Jason Sudeikis) is lured back from Kansas, where he was working on a supermarket checkout, to manage AFC Richmond's second division women's team. "Welcome back, coach," a passer-by in Richmond says. "Too bad you're coaching a bunch of girls. You wanker."

In the pub three young men ask Ted if working with female footballers is "slow" and "boring" and wonder if their menstrual cycles have synced yet. Ho ho. Later during a pub quiz a group of men tell the women's team their football is of inferior quality because of "your tits".

This show needed an energy shot of fresh blood and a female team was a logical next step. The last series was accused, fairly, of being weak, bloated and far too long, but now we have new characters, the best of which is the sullen women's coach Alice (an excellent Tanya Reynolds), who knows her stuff but quits when Rebecca (Hannah Waddingham) gives Ted — a man — the job instead of her. Needless to say Ted works his "howdy y'all" charm on her and persuades her to stay, although even he can't stop her Olympic-standard glowering or make her respond to a high five. You sense that Alice couldn't lighten up if her life depended on it.

But the scenario is a wellspring for new comedy. Ted, terrified of walking in on the women half-naked in the changing rooms, wears a wastepaper bin over his head to enter (Sudeikis shows great comic timing here) while Coach Beard (Brendan Hunt) affixes Post-it Notes to his glasses.

Needless to say the women have been treated like second-class citizens with a crappy changing room with one shower and a sign stuck badly to the door saying "Women's locker room". But Keeley (Juno Temple), who is embroiled in a "will-they-won't-they" story arc with the husky-voiced Roy (Brett Goldstein), sorts them out with a better one, and it all becomes a bit sugary and mawkish.

Episode one is pretty superfluous. Rebecca, Keeley and Lesley fly to Kansas in a private jet to talk Ted round and there follows too much stuff about yard sales and barbecue sauce. They could and should have dealt with this in 15 minutes. Ted persuades his estranged wife and son to come to the UK with him.

The sentimentality that made Lasso so popular, winning it plaudits for being a feelgood antidote to toxic masculinity, is still present, sometimes cloyingly so. There are still lines that peter out and die where there should have been a punchline. But there are plenty of funny ones too. The team's physiotherapist (a woman) tells Ted she is available to him too, "including bum stuff — complete confidentiality". I did laugh at that. I also laughed at Ted saying, when Susan Boyle was mentioned: "Is that what British folks call skin tags?"

There's an unconvincing subplot in which Rebecca keeps standing up her pilot lover at a swanky restaurant so the waiter thinks he's a fantasist who has invented a girlfriend. But it did tee up a funny gag. When Rebecca finally turns up wearing one of her outfits the waiter whispers to a colleague: "He had to hire a whore to save face."

Anyway, the women's team is fertile ground to address sexism in the game and introduce new characters, although occasionally you could argue the show itself is sexist. The scene when the women have a shrieking fight in the locker room, where Ted tells them they are like girls fighting over friendship bracelets, plays to stereotypes. Sometimes it can get carried away with the tweeness. But it is still uplifting, unpretentious, homely television with a strong moral compass, and there is a hunger for that, otherwise it wouldn't have won two Golden Globes and 13 Emmys.

A kitty frolic with f-bombs

Will you enjoy Ricky Gervais's *Alley Cats*? Well, that depends. If you are offended by the c-word then there's a high chance you will absolutely hate it.

I am not remotely offended by the word, but here it is said so wearily often by the gang of stray mogs lounging on a skanky sofa in a derelict house that it loses its bite and becomes verbal wallpaper. If you are one of those (weird) people who hates cats, though, you may get quiet satisfaction from the fact that half of this feline cast are unlikeable boors who speak pure filth. One is a pervert who says he had anal sex with a hedgehog. As you can see, this is not a cutesy feline PR job.

But here's the good news. It looks lovely, an evocatively drawn, retroish 2D cartoon that reminds me of the *Top Cat* era and provides funny insights into the contrarian, unsentimental nature of (some) cats, which Gervais presumably gets from his own tabby, Pickle (the sweary lead character, Gus, voiced by Gervais, is apparently a sort of cross between Pickle and himself). Most of the voice actors — including David Earl, Diane Morgan, Tom Basden and Jo Hartley — appeared in Gervais's previous Netflix show *After Life* and some play similar characters. So it's essentially a feral feline *After Life* but with the distinct whiff of tomcat pee.

Alley Cats is a feral feline After Life but with the distinct whiff of tomcat pee

The premise is that this group of fleabitten cats plus a posh one, nicknamed "Ponce", from a nearby house where it is fed salmon, survive on their wits. The hardcase cats mock Ponce, who speaks nicely, is castrated and is fed chicken in a rich gravy with added calcium. These bits are well observed and are the funniest; it is as if they are geezers bantering in a pub. It opens with the ginger tom Gus battering Ponce (real name Rupert) on the head for no reason — "I'm a cat. That's what cats do" — which is true because mine does it to me all the time. They take in a lost kitten, a development that delivers tenderness and musings on God, death and the meaning of life.

Full disclosure: I am a Ricky Gervais fangirl who loves his work for animal welfare, thinks *The Office* was genius, *Extras* was genius and *After Life* was genius, in that order of merit. *Alley Cats* is not in their league, but I love that he uses it to show how casually cruel humans can be to animals (a child is punished by the cats for his cruelty). But it's funnier when it isn't being juvenile. Such as when the pervert cat says he "f***s a rat".

I'm puzzled that it goes so out of its way to shock when it doesn't need to. The swearing is stupendously heavy and the attempts to be "offensive" (eg fat kids and disability) are very on the nose. I wonder if the Netflix people are too afraid to say to Gervais: "Could you rein it in a bit?" Less is more.

There are profound bits such as when they see an old, frail friend in a cat carrier about to go to the vet to be euthanised. "I've heard you don't feel a thing," Gus says, in a very brief commentary on assisted dying. I think that many viewers will miss these gems because, amid the blizzard of "c***s" and "f***s", they have switched off.

Streaming

From iPlayer to Netflix — best new shows and hidden gems

Sports doc

A new three-part documentary on José Mourinho

Netflix

Mourinho
Available Tuesday

Up close and personal with the Special One

In June, José Mourinho confirmed that he would be returning to manage Real Madrid, 13 years after his last stint with one of the world's most successful football clubs. It's a good moment for this dynamic three-part documentary, then, which traces Mourinho's career from Porto and Chelsea to Inter Milan and beyond, combining an impressive array of contributors — among them Frank Lampard, Didier Drogba, Alex Ferguson and John Terry — with personal interviews with the "Special One" himself. It's a fascinating and revealing portrait of modern football's most charismatic figure. **Victoria Segal**

Mo Gilligan eats only fried chicken for a month

Big Chicken
Available now

Best doc

What would happen to your body if you ate nothing but fried chicken every day for a month? That's the challenge that the comedian Mo Gilligan sets himself in this eye-opening documentary about the fast-food industry. With each day of his odyssey, Gilligan attempts to find out more about the impact that the world's love of the white-meat fowl is having on our health and the environment. If you are familiar with Morgan Spurlock's 2004 documentary *Super Size Me* you will already have guessed the narrative arc.

My Brilliant Career
Available Thursday

New series

In the wake of *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little House on the Prairie* comes another Netflix series about the adventures of a young girl caught between civilisation and wildness. The darkest of the three original books, Miles Franklin's tale of growing up in the rural Australia of the 1890s has arguably received the finest adaptation. Philippa Northeast is magnificent as the headstrong Sybylla Melvyn and the first two episodes crackle with an earthy love-triangle sensuality.

Philippa Northeast stars in an Australian period drama

Chris O'Connor and Shane Gillis in season three of Tires

Tires
Available Thursday

Series return

Vilified by the critics, Shane Gillis's low-budget workplace comedy about life in an auto repair shop is a huge hit with audiences, especially those who were already fans of the *SNL* rebel's regular-guy stand-up comedy. Fans of *Tires* weren't looking for clever or groundbreaking satire but a cosy comedy that you can put on in the background and treat as a low-stakes hangout. Also working in its favour was the chemistry between Shane (Gillis) and his cousin, Will (Steve Gerben). Season three arrives this week.

The Idaho Murders: College Nightmare
Available now

This three-part true crime docuseries is built around the stories of the four victims — the University of Idaho students Madison Mogen, Kaylee Goncalves, Ethan Chapin and Xana Kernodle — rather than the person who killed them. The production team, including the Academy Award-nominated executive producer Joe Berlinger, were in Moscow, Idaho, shortly after the horrifying murders happened, ready to tell the story as it unfolds, through bodycam footage, texts and interviews with loved ones.

A true crime documentary about the Idaho Murders

Apple TV

Women in Blue
Available Wednesday

Series return

The first season of this Spanish-language series, inspired by the true story of Mexico City's first female police force, was a revelation. Despite its initial appearance as a prime chunk of telenovela retrosexism, the show revealed itself to be an intelligent and unsettling serial killer drama that dissected institutionalised police corruption and dark periods of Mexican history. Now back for a second season, with housewife-turned-detective María (Bárbara Mori) promoted to lieutenant, the show goes even deeper into the city's dubious political past.

Bárbara Mori stars in season two of Women in Blue

A film about the photographer James Ravilious

YouTube

Endless Summers
Available now

James Ravilious was one of the great British photographers of the 20th century. The son of the artists Eric Ravilious and Tirzah Garwood, he was best known for his beautiful, high-contrast, black-and-white stills of rural life in north Devon, without nostalgia or sentimentality. In this intimate 1985 documentary Ravilious Jr talks about his initial inadequacy as a painter and his realisation that the immediacy of the camera suited him far better. What is also commendable is how much attention the film devotes to the role played by Ravilious's wife, Robin.

Now

Tom Ellis stars in Dick Wolf's latest police procedural, CIA

CIA
Available now

Crime drama

The latest offering in the Dick "*Law & Order*" Wolf universe leaves no crime cliché unused, but is still addictive viewing. Tom Ellis plays Colin Glass, a rule-breaking, charming British CIA case officer, while Nick Gehlfuss is Bill Goodman, a seasoned, by-the-book FBI agent. The odd couple pairing are assigned to a clandestine New York fusion cell to investigate domestic threats on US soil. Glass operates exclusively in the grey with Goodman insistent on trusting the rule of law. But together, they get the job done in a procedural/buddy movie.

World War II with Tom Hanks
Available now

Presented and executive produced by Tom Hanks, this 20-part series has ambitions to become a 21st-century *World At War*, spanning the entire timeline of the conflict. It uses Hanks's gravitas to anchor its comprehensive account of "the biggest military event in human history", one that killed at least 65 million people. Combining vivid archive footage with contributions from historians including Simon Sebag Montefiore, Dan Snow, Antony Beevor, Dr Tessa Dunlop and Dr Saul David, it meets the challenge of presenting global history on the grandest scale.

David Thewlis, left, and the cast of An Inspector Calls

Literary drama

BBC iPlayer

An Inspector Calls
Available now

David Thewlis shines in a JB Priestley adaptation

Produced in 2015 as part of a run of Sunday night BBC literary adaptations, Helen Edmundson's film-length reworking of JB Priestley's 1944 morality play is arguably worth watching purely for David Thewlis's performance as the titular detective who arrives unannounced at the home of an upper-middle-class family to question them about the suicide of a young working-class woman. What impresses on second viewing is how the director Aisling Walsh initially presents the play as a cosy *Downton Abbey* drama, one that she delights in dismantling. **Andrew Male**

Kabul
Available now

It is five years since the chaotic withdrawal of American troops from Kabul, Afghanistan, and this gritty six-part drama is set against the backdrop of these real-life events. As the Taliban enters the city, the Nazany family, like many civilians, are forced to flee, fearing retaliation. As well as the family, the action unfolds from the perspective of the multinational team, including French police officers, Italian diplomats, German military personnel and American intelligence services, who must work together to manage the evacuation.The peril is heightened by the looming threat of an Isis attack.

FILM: Dolittle PG, 2020
Available now

Robert Downey Jr was pilloried by the critics for his inexplicable Welsh accent, but this family film works fine as harmless school-holiday viewing. It follows the voyage of Dr Dolittle (Downey Jr) to several zany Caribbean locales to retrieve a book written by his dead wife that will reveal the site of a magical fruit tree that can save the dying Queen Victoria (Jessie Buckley). She is the only one who can stop the deeds to Dolittle's mansion from being sold. And yes, he can talk to the animals, which include a macaw, voiced by Emma Thompson, and a tiger called Barry (Ralph Fiennes). (97min)

Prime Video

Reacher
Available Wednesday

Series return

There is a great deal of action-hero fun to be had with this fourth series based on Lee Child's novels about a military police investigator turned crime-fighting drifter — the Littlest Hobo with bigger muscles. Jack Reacher (Alan Ritchson) begins this season in Philadelphia, where he is drawn into a conspiratorial web after witnessing a woman's suicide. The plot that unravels allows Ritchson's intuitive beefcake to showcase both his formidable powers of deduction and his ability to crush a man to death in unusual ways.

Alan Ritchson returns in season four of Lee Child's Reacher

The Chosen in the Wild
Available Sunday

New series

In this documentary adventure series, Bear Grylls takes the stars of the Jesus drama *The Chosen*, including Elizabeth Tabish, who portrays Mary Magdalene in the series, and puts them through their survival paces in the USA's most extreme landscapes. The stars are game, mostly, and Grylls is cock-a-hoop. "Sock-sucking with Judas Iscariot!" he blurts with glee as Luke Dimyan attempts to slurp brown run-off water through his hiking hosiery in Castle Valley, Utah. "Wait, are we actually doing this?" Dimyan asks. Oh yes we are.

FILM: The Good Boy 15, 2026
Available now

Stephen Graham and Andrea Riseborough play an odd couple in this bold and weirdly poignant black comedy. Chris (Graham) is a former copper in toupee and sensible specs who, at the silent urging of Riseborough's grief-stricken Kathryn, kidnaps a twentysomething yob called Tommy (Anson Boon). They fit him with a metal collar and chain him up in the cellar of their remote mansion, tasering him if he gets out of hand. If the set-up isn't outrageously original, with shades of *Misery* and *A Clockwork Orange*, the actors are rarely less than captivating. (110min)

more streaming next page ▶

Channel 4

Revenge
Available now

This modern-day adaptation of *The Count of Monte Cristo* follows society woman Emily Thorne (Emily VanCamp) as she returns to the Hamptons and sets about dismantling the lives of the wealthy families who double-crossed her father, not least his one-time lover and betrayer, Victoria Grayson (Madeleine Stowe). Stylish, sleazy but deeply self-aware, this is basically *Pretty Little Liars* crossed with *Desperate Housewives*. Plough on past the season two wobble and you will be rewarded with a viciously assembled soap opera executed with the discipline of a crime thriller.

Emily VanCamp stars in the crime thriller Revenge

The Undeclared War
Available now

This drama might operate in the fast-paced world of national defence but the second series of Peter Kosminsky and Colin Callender's high-stakes thriller has taken four years to make it back on screen. It unfolds in a state of paranoia, as Simon Pegg's GCHQ head Danny Patrick deals with the consequences of last season's Russian cyberattack. Meanwhile, Saara (Hannah Khalique-Brown) fights to save Vadim the hacker (German Segal). Chloe Pirrie plays the head of a new military rapid-response team, who ramps up Danny's diplomatic headache.

FILM: Riders of Justice 15, 2020
Available now

Mads Mikkelsen plays an Afghanistan veteran bringing the fury of war to Denmark. He is Markus, a soldier who returns home when his wife and daughter are caught up in a criminally engineered train crash. With all fingers pointing to the neo-Nazi Riders of Justice bikers, Markus uncorks his inner Schwarzenegger. The film is more concerned with character than body count, but the action scenes are impeccably done. (116min)

● Previews by Andrew Male, Victoria Segal, Joe Clay, John Dugdale, Ben Dowell

John Thaw and Dennis Waterman in The Sweeney

Retro classic

ITVX

The Sweeney
Available now

The hard-as-nails Seventies cop drama

Fifty-plus years since it first crashed into our lives, this hard-as-nails cop drama still has the power to shock and amaze. That's partly down to the performances from John Thaw and Dennis Waterman as dissipated detective Jack Regan and his loyal enforcer, George Carter. What doesn't get praised enough is the squalid poetry of the episodes themselves, moving between blunt violence and a kind of grubby urban exhaustion. At times there is an almost existential futility to the lives of Regan and Carter; men adrift, trapped inside their roles with no sign of redemption. **Andrew Male**

HBO Max

Duster
Available now

Cult drama

If your favourite moments in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* were Brad Pitt driving muscle cars along Sunset Strip, then do we have a series for you. Cancelled after one season, this 1970s-set crime thriller stars *Lost*'s Josh Holloway as rugged getaway driver Jim Ellis. Ellis teams up with the FBI's first black female agent, Nina Hayes (Rachel Hilson), to help bring down crime syndicate boss Ezra Saxton (Keith David). The cars are beautiful and Hilson is terrific as a young black woman navigating the racism and sexism of the era.

Josh Holloway stars in the crime thriller Duster

Bang My Box
Available now

From 1977 to 1998, Robin Byrd hosted a late-night public-access phone-in show that interviewed sex-workers and adult entertainers. Campy, low-budget and designed to titillate, *The Robin Byrd Show* was also a platform for the LGBTQ community, one that provided Aids awareness coverage at a time when the disease was still being called "the gay plague". In this short-but-sweet documentary we meet the 69-year-old Byrd today, caring for her husband of 50 years and wondering what to do with her vast archive of tapes and memorabilia.

Fukushima: A Nuclear Nightmare
Available now

In March 2011 the largest earthquake in Japan's recorded history triggered a tsunami that ravaged large areas of the country and led to widespread loss of life. The tsunami surged over the seawall protecting the Fukushima nuclear power plant on Japan's Pacific coast, flooding its basements and cutting off its power. This documentary from James Jones (*Chernobyl: The Lost Tapes*) and Megumi Inman tells the story of the disaster through real-time detail and interviews with government advisers, engineers, journalists and emergency workers.

An Audience with...
Available now

Devised in 1978 by London Weekend Television, this revue show, in which a celebrity raconteur fields questions from a congregation of fellow famous faces, now feels like TV from another age. First, it's hard to think of modern celebrities who could hold a stage with the style and elan of Victoria Wood, Ken Dodd, Peter Ustinov or Dame Edna. Second, it's quite staggering how many of the so-called luminaries in the audience are unfamiliar today. But what remains is the wit and the charisma of first-class humorists and anecdotalists holding the audience spellbound.

Cleaning Up
Available now

In this 2019 drama, Sheridan Smith plays Sam, a warm-hearted, working-class single mum struggling to keep her head above water. She has separated from her husband (Matthew McNulty), and he wants custody of their daughters because he doesn't think she is a dependable parent. To make ends meet Sam works a zero-hours contract as an office cleaner in Canary Wharf, but she also has an online gambling addiction and owes money to a debt collector (Neil Maskell). Just as the walls appear to be closing in, her job presents her with a potentially lucrative, but risky, lifeline.

Disney+

The Tale of Silyan
Available now

Hidden gem

A National Geographic film about a Macedonian farmer who adopts an injured white stork might initially suggest some kind of anthropomorphic *My Octopus Teacher* documentary about sentimental communication across the human/animal divide. However, the director Tamara Kotevska takes this dream-like tale and weaves it together with a 17th-century Macedonian folk tale about a man transformed into a stork, and an entrancing, angering tale of cultural displacement, industrialised farming and economic struggle.

The Macedonian farmer Nikola nurses an injured white stork

FILM: Thunderbolts 12, 2025
Available now

If you are planning on watching *Avengers: Doomsday* in December, this superhero film starring Florence Pugh, David Harbour and Sebastian Stan is essential viewing. Refreshingly devoid of CGI, it is instead focused on the impact of poor mental health. The first scene is a mood setter, with Pugh's Russian super-spy Yelena Belova complaining of existential despair while inching towards the roof edge of Kuala Lumpur's 118-storey Merdeka tower. Sounds awful, but no. In other words, it's a superhero movie without the usual Marvel bombast. (127min)

The Last Man on Earth
Available now

Will Forte (*The Four Seasons*) and Kristen Schaal (*What We Do in the Shadows*) star in a post-apocalyptic comedy created by Forte that ran for four seasons (2015-18). It is set in the future after a virus has wiped out the population of the world. Forte plays a heavily bearded loser left to his own devices like a teenager in *Home Alone*, living off beer, junk food and porn, and turning his luxury home into a landfill site. Then, out of nowhere, up pops a former officer manager (Schaal), who wants to get him back on the straight and narrow so they can repopulate the world.

The best of the rest

Paramount+

Star Trek
Available now

Best sci-fi

With news that active production of *Star Trek* TV shows has stalled and with Paramount talking about a franchise reboot, it's a good time to revisit the show's original incarnation and remind ourselves what made it work. Here was a show that was utopian without being bland, with a central character dynamic (Kirk/Spock/McCoy) that replicated the id/superego/ego model of the human psyche and plots written by sci-fi authors who used the show to explore deep philosophical ideas. Yes, it can now look a little cheap and silly, but its bones are strong.

Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner in Star Trek

5

Witness Number 3
Available now

Jodie (Nina Toussaint-White) is a hairdresser with a strong social conscience. So when she witnesses a man being led to an unknown fate, she tells the police. While they keep her in the dark about the crime and their suspect, this 2022 drama withholds the details from us too; effectively building suspense, as Jodie is subjected to intimidating phone images and threats to harm her son and wreck her flat. As she starts to get cold feet about being a witness, Toussaint-White is the right mix of ordinary and extraordinary.

Pay-for film

Nirvanna: The Band, the Show, the Movie 15, 2025
Available now on Sky Store, Prime Video and more

Matt Johnson's goofy mockumentary about a hopeless musical duo (Johnson and Jay McCarrol). Desperate for fame, despite never composing or playing an original song, they are Spinal Tap without the tracks.

Scary Movie 15, 2026
Available now on Sky Store, Prime Video and more

The masked killer Ghostface returns in the sixth entry in the parody horror franchise, which stars Regina Hall and Anna Faris.

Sport The best live viewing

Can Euro king Unai Emery outwit PSG?

The Super Cup gives us a chance to see how Aston Villa can hold up after selling Morgan Rogers and Youri Tielemans, two of their finest assets, this summer.

You can be sure Villa manager Unai Emery, *right*, will be motivated to outwit Paris Saint-Germain, his expensively assembled former club. Emery has the Midas touch in European competition, but PSG look set to dominate domestically and abroad. **Alyson Rudd**

Live Uefa Super Cup: Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa Wed, TNT Sport 1, 8pm

SATURDAY 8

Live Tour de France Women
TNT Sports 1, 2.30pm
The eighth stage of the race, a 175km route from Sisteron to Nice.

Live EFL Cup: West Ham United v Portsmouth
Sky Sports+, 3pm
The first-round match from The London Stadium. At 5.30pm on Sky Main Event, Colchester United face Southampton at JobServe Community Stadium.

The Hundred Live: Southern Brave Men v Manchester Super Giants Men
Sky Cricket, 6pm
The match from Utilita Bowl in Southampton.

Live Rugby Union: Argentina v South Africa
Sky Sports+, 8pm
The match from Estadio José Amalfitani in Buenos Aires.

SUNDAY 9

Live SPFL: Kilmarnock v Celtic
Sky Main Event, 1.30pm
The Scottish Premiership match from The BBSP Stadium Rugby Park.

Live EFL Cup: Mansfield Town v Sheffield United
Sky Main Event, 4pm
The first-round match from One Call Stadium.

Live London Premier Padel
TNT Sports 1, 4pm
The men's final, which takes place at The Grand Hall at Olympia in London. The women's final is at 2pm.

The Hundred Live: London Spirit Men v Birmingham Phoenix Men
BBC2, 6pm
The match at Lord's. The women's match between the same teams is at 2.30pm.

MONDAY 10

Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026
BBC2, 8pm
The evening session on day one from Alexander Stadium. The women's 100m final is the concluding event of the night

Live EFL Cup: Plymouth Argyle v Exeter City
Sky Main Event, 8pm
Coverage of the first-round match at Home Park.

TUESDAY 11

The Hundred Live: Manchester Super Giants Men v Sunrisers Leeds Men
Sky Main Event, 6.30pm
The match at Emirates Old Trafford. The women's match takes place at 3pm.

European Athletics: Birmingham 2026
BBC1, 8pm
The evening session on day two including the men's 100m.

Keely Hodgkinson targets the 800m (Fri, BBC1, 8pm)

WEDNESDAY 19

Live Pre-Season Football: Manchester United v Leeds United
ITV1, 7.30pm
Coverage of the friendly match at Croke Park, Dublin.

European Athletics: Birmingham 2026
BBC1, 8pm
The action includes the men's 400m final, the women's 400m hurdles and the men's 110m hurdles final.

THURSDAY 13

Live Super League: Leeds Rhinos v Leigh Leopards
Sky Main Event, 8pm
All the action from the match at AMT Headingley Stadium.

FRIDAY 14

The Hundred Live: The Men's Eliminator
Sky Main Event, 6pm
The match between the second and third-placed teams, held at The Kia Oval in London. The Women's Eliminator is at 2.15pm.

European Athletics: Birmingham 2026
BBC1, 8pm
Keely Hodgkinson of Team GB could feature in the women's 800m final. Finals also take place in the men's high jump and 200m.

Live EFL: Wolverhampton Wanderers v Blackburn Rovers
Sky Main Event, 8pm
Coverage of the opening match of the Championship campaign, held at Molineux.

Podcasts

Who would want to survive the apocalypse with this smug lot?

James Marriott on a new series where preppers give tips on eating woodlice

The Bare Necessities
Available on Radio 4 and BBC Sounds

You know things are bad when the BBC moves on from warning about the apocalypse to simply offering practical tips about how to survive it when it inevitably happens. Some listeners may find this attitude unduly defeatist. In a new Radio 4 series, *The Bare Necessities*, the presenter Dan Richards seeks out survivalist wisdom from "tradition bearers and carriers of ancient knowledge". It's all very informative and there's a great deal for pampered urbanites like me to learn. But my main takeaway is that the No 1 challenge of the apocalypse is going to be smugness. After our civilisation falls apart, everyone with survival skills is going to be completely intolerable.

In the first episode Richards talks to the survivalist Zeki Basan (a "happy, gentle young man in possession of ancient magic"). They go to a Scottish forest where Basan says "it's really nice" to think of the trees as "friends". It's hard to ignore the note of self-satisfaction when he asks Richards: "How often do you go into woodlands and spend a bit of time, Dan?"

Basan suggests those looking for protein could try hunting for woodlice in rotted pine trees. Er... no thanks. Another tip is to add old pinewood to your fire. It's "incredibly resinous" and will "give you a much brighter flame". This means that you can stay up later so you can "work at night on a carving project". I could deal with the woodlice but I can't imagine any fate worse than sitting in a post-apocalyptic wasteland working on a carving project. Take me, drones and nuclear bombs! Asked whether he thinks he could survive a civilisation-destroying catastrophe, Basan says complacently: "Personally I feel not much would change in my life." All right, but what about the rest of us?

Post-apocalyptic life does not look much more appealing when we meet Monica Wilde, a "forager, herbalist and

The survivalist Zeki Basan says he see trees as friends

reluctant prepper". But is she really so reluctant, the listener wonders. She has already spent a year living off wild food and says she has eaten "300 species of plant, 87 species of fungi, 27 species of seaweed and a huge variety of shells, seafood and fish". You wouldn't catch me eating any species of seaweed until absolutely necessary for strict post-apocalyptic reasons. But then I suppose I'm a decadent urbanite.

I thought at least the episode on hunting might allow me to feel superior for 15 minutes. I never kill anything. Michael Wachter, a hunter, shoots deer — which, as the Disney film *Bambi* has taught us, is about the worst thing a person could possibly do. Surely the city-dwellers have one over on the "tradition bearers" here! Unfortunately, it turns out hunting also makes you morally superior. Wachter says "on average it takes a stalker nine hours to get one deer" which means "most of the time hunting is basically just walking through the woods in silence which is very, very similar to meditating". He says that when he takes people hunting they say: "I feel so calm and grounded."

Hunting is also very spiritual. "Being able to harvest a deer," Wachter says, "feeds my soul." He then explains that "at the beginning and end of the hunting and fishing season I normally come and just give thanks" for the "all the deer that nourished me and my local ecosystem and my community, my bioregion." He adds piously: "I'm so grateful to all the deer in the woods for giving their lives and their bodies to nurture us."

If civilisation does collapse, it will be traumatising. You will also have to spend the aftermath begging for help to start a fire from people who keep smugly asking how much time *you* ever spent giving thanks for the fruits of the wider bioregion.

So, when the bombs are falling and you're wondering whether you should leg it to the nearest air raid shelter, all this might be worth bearing in mind. You may just want to stay put.

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THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

Films What movies to watch or record on television this week

Saturday August 8

Summer Holiday U, 1963
BBC2, 1.50pm

Profoundly camp (Cliff Richard in fishnet T-shirt!) yet impossible not to love, this all-singing, all-dancing trans-European odyssey features Richard as Don, the coiffed mechanic who drags his three work buddies on a road trip to Greece in a double-decker bus. The songs are top-tier (the title track and *Bachelor Boy* are standouts), the dance routines even better, while the director Peter Yates delivers one of the great black-and-white-to-colour transitions in film history. Una Stubbs is terrific as the leader of the girl gang who crash Don's man trip. (104min)

Best musical

Cliff Richard, far right, stars in the bus odyssey Summer Holiday

Superman II PG, 1980
BBC2, 5.35pm

Shot back-to-back with its predecessor, Christopher Reeve's second Superman outing opens with the trio of banished super-villains from the first film, led by Terence Stamp's General Zod, arriving on Earth to wreak havoc. What entails is a surprisingly entertaining blockbuster considering the backstage wrangling that went into it, including a lawsuit from Marlon Brando and the mid-shoot replacement of the director Richard Donner with Richard Lester. In 2006 Lester released his cut of the movie, which included a large amount of discarded footage. (127min)

Quantum of Solace 15, 2008
ITV1, 8pm

In his second performance as James Bond 007, Daniel Craig delivers his performance with a cold, cruel panache. The many action sequences are dispatched with ruthless efficiency and an exponential body count — Judi Dench's M looks on with a withering distaste as yet another suspect dies along with their secrets at Bond's overzealous hands. Dialogue is stripped down to a minimum and employed mainly to explain the trajectory of the globe-hopping storyline. This instalment of the Bond franchise is lean, mean and all about the action. (106min)

Fallen Leaves 12, 2023
BBC2, 12.20am

Aki Kaurismaki, the Finnish writer-director, won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival with this bitter then sweet tale of middle-aged deadbeats looking for love. Alma Poysti plays Ansa, who works on a zero-hour contract in a Helsinki supermarket. Holappa (Jussi Vatanen) is a construction worker who takes swigs of booze while operating heavy machinery. Hardly love's young dream, then, and there is as much fun to be had in their melancholy as there is in their romance. It's a slight but captivating film, played with deadpan wit. (81min)

Movie premiere

Hamnet
12A, 2025
Friday, Sky Cinema Premiere/Now, 8pm

Jessie Buckley's Oscar-winning turn

There is such grief and such beauty in this adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's award-winning novel about the death of Shakespeare's son Hamnet at 11, and the impact that it had on the writer and his wife, Anne Hathaway, reclaimed here from history as Agnes (as she was listed in her father's will). She is played by Jessie Buckley in an Oscar-winning performance for the ages. Agnes is our wide-eyed guide through the flowering of early love, the shock of parental loss and the endurance of sorrow, with her famous husband played by Paul Mescal. (125min) **Kevin Maher**

Monday August 10

The Girl on the Train
15, 2016
Sky Cinema Thriller, 3.25pm

In this adaptation of Paula Hawkins's bestselling thriller Emily Blunt gives a raw, courageous performance as the heroine. Drowning in her sorrow and mascara, Blunt is Rachel Watson, an unreliable narrator prone to drunken blackouts and fits of jealousy over her ex-husband as she passes his house on her daily commute. The one constant in Rachel's life is a journey from New York to the city. Her only pleasure is voyeurism, and one day she sees something shocking from the train. A grim tension builds as she spies on two couples as her train passes their houses. (107min)

Shaft 15, 1971
BBC2, 11.05pm

Retro classic

A classic of the 1970s Blaxploitation era, this groovy thriller (think of that famous Isaac Hayes score) has a great performance from Richard Roundtree as the tough New York private eye of the title, hired by a gangster to find his missing teenage daughter. However, the case proves far more dangerous than expected, as the girl has been kidnapped by the mafia, meaning he's soon in the middle of a turf war for control of Harlem. Roundtree reprised the role of "the cat that won't cop out when there's danger all about" in *Shaft's Big Score!* (1972) and *Shaft in Africa* (1973). (100min)

Lucy in the Sky 15, 2019
Film4, 1.20am

Natalie Portman excels in Noah Hawley's thriller as Lucy Cola, a Nasa astronaut who has been changed, emotionally and psychologically, by her ten days aboard the International Space Station. We see this in a spacewalk at the top of the thermosphere, a vision of twinkling vistas and godlike sunbeams received by Lucy as something between a religious epiphany and a life-defining orgasm. Back on Earth she starts to lose touch with reality and we sympathise with her struggle. Proper acting from one of the modern greats. (125min)

Tuesday August 11

Fantastic Voyage U, 1966
Film4, 2.30pm

In Richard Fleischer's enjoyable sci-fi hokum — a Jules Verne yarn in all but name — a submarine and its crew are shrunk and injected into the bloodstream of an injured scientist so that they can clear a blood clot in his brain, saving his life and salvaging the secret of world peace. Stephen Boyd and Raquel Welch are the leaders of the miniaturised medical team, who face a desperate race against time, sabotage and hostile antibodies. The cleverly staged interior landscape of the body helped to secure it two Oscars — for art design and special effects. (96min)

Full Metal Jacket 15, 1987
Sky Cinema Drama, 8pm

Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam picture is, like most great war films, about more than just conflict. Bleak and violent, it examines how ordinary men become indoctrinated and tainted by combat. The film is divided into two segments — the first deals with the basic training under a formidable drill sergeant (real-life Marine Corps veteran R Lee Ermey). The second follows the recruits through the eyes of the young soldiers, played by actors including Matthew Modine and Vincent D'Onofrio, now shaped into killing machines. (111min)

R Lee Ermey's drill sergeant leads the training in Full Metal Jacket

The Kid Detective 15, 2020
Channel 4, 2.45am

The debut feature of the writer-director Evan Morgan is a meticulously constructed slow-burn thriller. It follows the misfortunes of a semi-alcoholic thirtysomething deadbeat called Abe (Adam Brody), who lives in a small American town and was once, as the title suggests, a celebrated pre-teen private eye. Abe is given one last shot at redemption when he is unexpectedly "hired" (no money is involved) by a distraught teenager to find the person who murdered her boyfriend. The case that unfolds is classic noir territory. (97min)

Wednesday August 12

Brighton Rock PG, 1947
Talking Pictures TV, 8.35pm

Richard Attenborough, aged only 24, creates one of the most chilling antiheroes in British cinema: baby-faced psychopath Pinkie Brown takes an unsettling satisfaction in his capacity for cruelty and ruthlessness. Young waitress Rose Brown (Carol Marsh) discovers this to her cost. When Pinkie finds she might be the loose end that could tie him to a recent murder, he does the logical thing: marries her, then sets about ruining her life. Tough-as-nails direction from John Boulting makes this the definitive version of Graham Greene's novel. (89min)

The Crazies
15, 2010
Sky Cinema Sci-Fi/Horror, 9.40pm

Cult horror

In this remake of the 1973 George A Romero classic, a mysterious toxin in the water

Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal

Inside Llewyn Davis 15, 2013
Sunday, BBC2, 10pm

A Coen brothers gem

Best drama

From the moment Llewyn Davis (a terrific Oscar Isaac) sings a folk ballad in a halo of smoke in 1961 New York, you know you are going to love this movie. With their usual melancholy irony, the Coen brothers chronicle the travails of Davis, who lives by couch-surfing in the apartments of his irritated friends. His problems are compounded when he acquires a cat, which becomes a metaphor for his struggles. This antihero's circle includes a folk-singing couple, played by Justin Timberlake and Carey Mulligan. (104min) **Kate Muir**

Oscar Isaac stars as Llewyn Davis

Sunday August 9

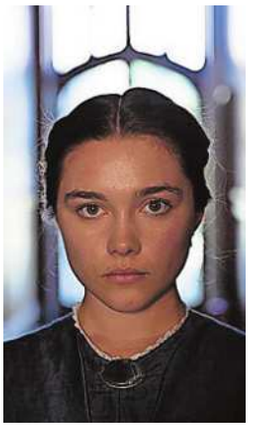
The Man Who Knew Too Much PG, 1956
BBC2, 12.20pm

Classic thriller

Alfred Hitchcock remade his own 1934 film, a thriller about a family on holiday who witness the death of a man and become caught up in the plot that killed him. James Stewart and Doris Day play Dr Benjamin McKenna and his wife, Jo, tourists in Morocco with their son. Working with a larger budget enabled Hitch to be more leisurely about the story's set-up, but the third act is as tight as ever. He once said that the 1934 version was "the work of a talented amateur, and the second was made by a professional". (117min)

Lady Macbeth 15, 2016
BBC2, 11.40pm

Florence Pugh plays a young Victorian bride bought by a dark, satanic colliery owner for his dissolute son. We see Pugh's character, Katherine, awaiting the attentions of her husband (Paul Hilton) in the bedchamber. "Are you nervous?" a maid asks. "No," Katherine says, and you know that she will be trouble. Pugh is superb, a powerful potion of rebellion, determination and lust. Despite the title this is not Shakespearean drama, but a reinterpretation of Nikolai Leskov's 1865 novella *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. (85min)



Florence Pugh stars in Lady Macbeth

To Kill a King 12, 2003
Film4, 1.50am

Rupert Everett is well cast as a defiant King Charles I in the director Mike Barker's period drama about the political intrigues and power struggles that followed the English Civil War. The central story follows Tim Roth's Oliver Cromwell as he quietly plots to unseat Lord General Thomas Fairfax (Dougray Scott) and seize the throne. The excellent ensemble cast includes Olivia Williams, James Bolam and Corin Redgrave. It also marked the "blink and you'll miss it" big screen debut of Benedict Cumberbatch, credited as a "Royalist". (93min)

turns corn-fed farmers into mindless killers. Our sympathies lie with the sheriff, played by Timothy Olyphant, and his newly pregnant wife, who screams as blank-eyed killers pop up behind every door, diner counter and even in the car wash. It turns out that the American military have crashed a plane filled with biological weapons into a nearby swamp, and soon soldiers arrive to "contain" the outbreak. (98mn)

The Rhythm Section 15, 2020
Film4, 11.40pm

It was once mooted as a franchise — a female-focused spy film "from the producers of James Bond" (Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson) that would launch a blockbusting series. But there was no sequel to this mishmash of *Léon*, *Nikita* and Jason Bourne fan fiction. Blake Lively is Stephanie, a grieving student genius who turns to prostitution and heroin when her family are murdered in a terrorist bombing. Then an ex-MI6 hardman (Jude Law) decides to train her as a black-ops specialist and she's ready to do the business. (109min)

Thursday August 13

Yesterday 12, 2019
BBC1, 10.40pm

The high concept at the centre of Danny Boyle and Richard Curtis's film is a lovely one. Himesh Patel is Jack Malik, a struggling busker from Suffolk who, after a brief global power cut, emerges into a world where the Beatles never existed. Jack, however, can remember the tunes and sing them with haunting clarity. He records a few, becomes famous and is tempted over to LA. All along, the riddle of Malik's new world deepens. What can it all mean? The answer to these questions arrives halfway in, and things focus instead on the ersatz romance between Malik and his best buddy, Ellie (Lily James). (113min)

Blades of Glory 12, 2007
Sky Cinema Comedy, 11.35pm

Will Ferrell plays Chazz Michael Michaels, the "ice-devouring sex tornado" of men's figure skating. His arch-rival is Jimmy MacElroy (Jon Heder), the effete golden boy. The pair clash when asked to share the gold medal at a competition. Things get ugly, the competition mascot is inadvertently torched, and both men are banned from competing for life. However, there's a loophole. Chazz and Jimmy can skate again; they just have to do it together. Much comedy is wrung from the fact that two men in tights are forced into close proximity with each other. (93min)

Berberian Sound Studio 15, 2012
Film4, 2am

This psychological thriller is movie nerd heaven. Not only does it reference the cult Italian "giallo" horrors of the Seventies, it's a celebration of the unsung talents behind the camera. Toby Jones plays Gilderoy, a sound technician who has been working on wholesome English productions. When he is summoned to Italy to work on a gruesome horror, his distaste at the extreme images doesn't dent his professionalism. However, the work begins to consume him. The excellent soundtrack was by Broadcast, a cult British band. (92min)

Friday August 14

No Country for Old Men 15, 2007
Sky Cinema Thriller, 8pm

Oscar winner

Josh Brolin has a knack for delivering the kind of performance that elevates a film, and the Coen brothers' Oscar-winning adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel is no exception. The taciturn hunter Llewelyn Moss (Brolin) stumbles on $2 million and a lot of corpses in the aftermath of a drug deal gone wrong; he takes the money and seals his fate. On his tail is Javier Bardem as the hired killer Anton Chigurh — his weapon of choice: bolt gun (his haircut of choice: ridiculous, but you probably wouldn't want to tell him). (122min)

On Falling 15, 2024
BBC2, 11.05pm

The subject of this oppressive social drama, produced by Ken Loach, is the dehumanising impact of low-paid labour inside mega warehouses run by corporate giants. The protagonist is a Portuguese immigrant, Aurora (Joana Santos), who is based in Scotland. Aurora is an exploited and poverty-stricken worker for whom travel, heating, phone charges and even food are unaffordable. The only respite from her soul-destroying daily routine is found in the glow of her smartphone. (101min)

Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain in Mothers' Instinct

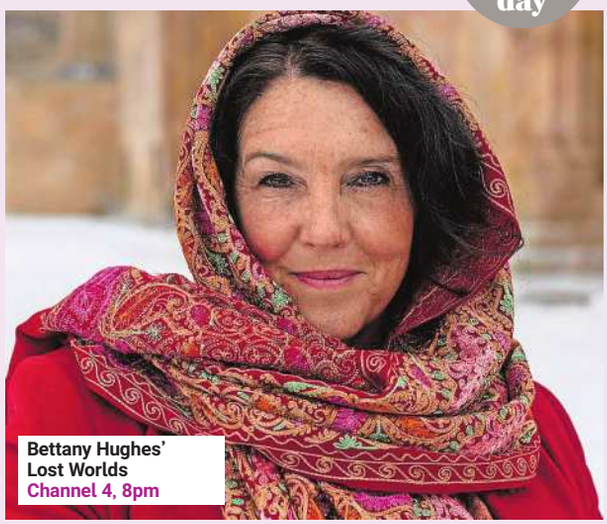
Mothers' Instinct 15, 2024
BBC1, 11.10pm

Anna Hathaway and Jessica Chastain play housewives whose social conformity is sustained only by drinking sessions, chain-smoking and the threat of being sectioned by their husbands. Stripped of outward-facing potential, Céline and Alice turn inwards and start measuring each other against their only permissible roles, as mothers. Watching Chastain and Hathaway sparking together is a joyous experience as the conflict between the pair erupts in venomous accusations, guilty denials, ersatz apologies and physical violence. (94min)

● **Previews by Kevin Maher, Ed Potton, Wendy Ide, Joe Clay**

Saturday 8

★ Picks of the day



Bettany Hughes' Lost Worlds
Channel 4, 8pm

Bettany Hughes takes us to ancient Turkey

Celebrity travelogues are often the scourge of television — all breezy freebies and floating around in linen. However, Bettany Hughes is a different kettle of archaeological fragments. Where others settle for froth, the formidable historian deploys academic gravitas and enviable access to archaeological sites to bring antiquity to life. Opening among the 12,000-year-old stone figures of Gobekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe in Turkey, Hughes marries deep scholarship with vivid storytelling. Her trek across Turkey takes in the cave dwellings of Ani and a stint on the Dogu Express. She traces ancient Silk Road routes, reflects on the legend of King Midas and explores Istanbul's crowded streets. At times you feel you are there with her. Ben Dowell

Elvis, the Colonel and the Mob
Channel 4, 10pm/11.05pm

"Uh huh huh." There are few stories about the king of rock'n'roll that his fans don't know, so little in this latest attempt to peel back the rhinestone-studded suit to reveal a tale of fame, manipulation and sleaze is fresh. Centre stage, of course, is his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, whose dealings with Las Vegas mobsters are well documented. But it remains a riveting if slightly sad tale that is neatly told as Elvis set 1950s America ablaze, while his gambling-addicted manager made dodgy deals with shady people and once supposedly lost $1 million in a single weekend. By the end of the 1960s Parker's need to pay his debts meant

Elvis Presley and his manager Colonel Tom Parker in 1955

Las Vegas was both Elvis's playground, sating his every appetite, and his gilded prison cell. "Uh huh huh," indeed. **BD**

Sandi Toksvig's Hidden Wonders
Channel 4, 7pm

More than 40 years after earning her degree in archaeology and anthropology from the University of Cambridge, the comedian Sandi Toksvig puts her expertise, wit and curiosity to excellent use in this series where she joins four archaeological digs. The format is not new but the discoveries are still mouthwatering, starting on a project unearthing a 2,000-year-old Iron Age cemetery in Dorset, which offers evidence of human sacrifice. **BD**

Space Soundtracks at the Proms
BBC2, 7.35pm

Often the BBC's attempts to make Prom-going fun can have you hiding behind your fingers. This one promises to be different as the actor and comedian Nick Mohammed launches us into deep space. The voyage includes the thunderous majesty of Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Gustav Holst's earth-shaking *The Planets*, John Williams's *Star Wars* fanfares, Hans Zimmer's sweeping *Interstellar* and Max Richter's haunting *Arrival*. **BD**

This week's best films on TV Pages 26-27

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
10.00 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites
11.30 Anna Haugh's Big Irish Food Tour (r) **12.00pm Homes Under the Hammer** (r)
1.00 BBC News; Weather
1.15 Bargain Hunt (r)
2.15 Money for Nothing (r)
3.15 Escape to the Country (r)
4.15 FILM **Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG, 2014)** Fantasy comedy sequel starring Ben Stiller
5.50 BBC News Headlines
6.00 BBC Regional News; Weather
6.10 The Hit List Celebrity Special Sara Pascoe, Rhys James, Jack P Shepherd, Chris Hughes, Gary Lamont and Renee Bailey compete
6.55 Alan Carr's Picture Slam With contestants from Coventry, London and Glasgow.

Bridget Jones's Diary (10.20pm)

7.40 Michael McIntyre's Big Show Josh Widdicombe plays the Midnight Gameshow, Tony Bellew hands over his phone in Send to All, and Justin Hawkins is the Unexpected Star Star of the Show (4/6) (r)
8.35 Pointless Celebrities Charlene White, Fern Britton, Chloe Madeley, James Haskell, Crystelle Pereira, Kwoklyn Wan, Phil Wang and Pierre Novellie take part (r)
9.25 How Are You? It's Alan (Partridge) Alan seeks to find joy in the unexpected. Comedy starring Steve Coogan (5/6) (r)
10.00 BBC News; Weather
10.20 FILM **Bridget Jones's Diary (15, 2001)** A woman begins a new year with resolutions to find love, quit her bad habits and take a step up the career ladder — but her plans soon crumble. Romantic comedy based on Helen Fielding's novel with Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth
11.50 FILM **Man Up (15, 2015)** A woman is mistaken for a stranger's blind date and decides to spend a chaotic evening with him. Comedy with Lake Bell and Simon Pegg
1.15 am Weather for the Week Ahead 1.20 BBC News

BBC2

6.30 am Piripenguins (r)
6.40 Big Lizard (r)
6.50 The Weasy Family (r)
6.55 Super Happy Magic Forest (r)
7.10 Grizzy and the Lemmings (r)
7.15 Duck and Frog (r)
7.25 Pokémon Horizons (r)
7.45 Winx Club (r) **8.10 The Next Step** (r) **8.35 Newsround**
8.45 Jamie Johnson FC (r)
9.15 Gardeners' World (r)
10.15 FILM **Angels One Five (U, 1953)** Adventure (b/w)
11.50 Great British Sewing Bee (r)
12.50 pm A Cook Abroad: Monica Galetti's France (r)
1.50 FILM **Summer Holiday (U, 1963)** Musical comedy
3.35 Fake or Fortune? (r)
4.35 Evolution Dolphins (r)
5.35 FILM **Superman II (PG, 1980)** Comic-strip adventure sequel starring Christopher Reeve

Paul Heaton in Sheffield (10.10pm)

7.35 Space Soundtracks at the Proms Music that has changed people's view of the universe, including Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. **See Pick of the Day**
8.35 Paul Heaton at the BBC Archive appearances by the former Housemartins and Beautiful South frontman, with the man himself explaining the context and back stories behind some of his best-loved hits
10.10 Live Paul Heaton: Live at Bramall Lane The singer returns to Sheffield for a 2025 concert at Sheffield United's stadium, delivering a career-spanning set featuring hits by the Housemartins and the Beautiful South, as well as highlights from his solo career
11.35 The Housemartins in London 0 Hull 4 A 1987 documentary about the band (r)
12.20 am Top of The Pops: The Beautiful South Performances
12.50 FILM **Fallen Leaves (12, 2023)** Romantic comedy starring Alma Pöysti and Jussi Vatanen
2.05 Sign Zone: The Rapture Gabs meets Anika Drake (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am James Martin's American Adventure Santa Monica (r)
7.00 FILM **The Man with the Golden Gun (PG, 1974)** James Bond adventure starring Roger Moore and Christopher Lee
9.25 ITV News Updates
9.30 James Martin's Saturday Morning With Guy Martin (r)
12.00 pm Prue Leith's Cotswold Kitchen With Sandi Toksvig (r)
1.00 ITV News; Weather
1.10 Live ITV Racing: From Ascot: Oli Bell presents coverage of the Shergar Cup, a team competition featuring top jockeys from around the world
5.00 Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals Dramatic endgames (r)
5.30 The Chase Celebrity Special Hosted by Bradley Walsh (r)
6.30 ITV News; Weather
6.45 Regional News; Weather

Bond film Quantum of Solace (8pm)

7.00 Deal or No Deal: Celebrity Special Stephen Mulhern hosts a special edition of the game show as television favourites Adam and Ryan Thomas go up against the infamous Banker
8.00 FILM **Quantum of Solace (12, 2008)** James Bond sets out on a personal mission of vengeance as he pursues the secret criminal organisation Quantum. His search leads him to the head of an ecological corporation, who is plotting to orchestrate a coup in a Latin American country to get his hands on a precious natural resource. Spy thriller sequel starring Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, Judi Dench and Gemma Arterton
10.05 ITV News
10.20 The Staircase In 2003, tensions rise and old wounds reopen as the Petersons' eldest son Clayton returns home and unwittingly makes a critical discovery, while Michael's fate hangs in the balance as the trial comes to a close (4/8)
11.35 Sorry, I Didn't Know Panellists include Desiree Burch and Matt Richardson (5/5) (r)
12.10 am Shop on TV
3.00 Cold Case Forensics: A Death on the Nile Investigating a British solicitors death (r) (SL)
3.50 Unwind with ITV
5.00 Fern Britton: Inside the Vet's A cat is castrated (r) (SL)

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven **7.15** Icons of Football (r) **7.30** Sportscene: Premiership Highlights **8.00 FILM Loch Ness (1996)** Family drama starring Ted Danson **9.35** From Scotland with Love. Documentary exploring themes of love, loss, resistance, migration, work and play (r) **10.50** Hercules the Bear: A Love Story (r) **11.50pm-Midnight** Loop (r)

BBC1 Wales 11.30am-Midday Weatherman Walking. Derek Brockway explores the South Wales Valleys (r)
BBC1 Scotland 11.50pm Sportscene: Premiership Highlights (r) **12.20am FILM Man Up (2015) 1.50-6.00am** BBC News

Your seven-day radio listings guide

Pages 42-43

Simon Schama hosts
Key Changes
Today, Radio 3, 1pm

Channel 4

6.10 am Cheers Comedy (r)
8.00 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
9.25 Frasier American sitcom (r)
10.55 The Simpsons (r)
12.25 pm The Simpsons (r)
12.55 Four in a Bed (r)
1.25 Four in a Bed (r)
1.55 Four in a Bed (r)
2.25 Four in a Bed (r)
2.55 Four in a Bed (r)
3.30 The Dog House A retired flight attendant looks to a cockapoo puppy for companionship (r)
4.30 Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It The hosts help a couple decide whether to renovate or sell their four-bed one-bathroom house (r)
5.35 Grand Designs A recently widowed 82-year-old sets out to build an accessible, ultra-sustainable home (r)
6.30 Channel 4 News

Sandi Toksvig's Hidden Wonders (7pm)

7.00 Sandi Toksvig's Hidden Wonders Sandi Toksvig rediscovers her love of archaeology, more than 40 years after earning her degree in the subject. **See Pick of the Day** (1/4) (r)

8.00 Bettany Hughes' Lost Worlds: Dawn of Civilisations The historian uncovers the origins of civilisation itself, tracing the birth of agriculture, religion, trade, myths, and empire. **See Pick of the Day** (1/2)

9.00 Dictator: The Hitler Interviews Personal testimonies of friends and contemporaries of Hitler, who recall how tyranny took hold in Germany during the 1930s (2/3)

10.00 Elvis, the Colonel and the Mob A look at how the singer got mixed up in organised crime, with the Mafia exploiting his Las Vegas shows to aid money-laundering operations. **See Pick of the Day** (1/2)

11.05 Elvis, the Colonel and the Mob By the late 1960s, Elvis Presley is creatively stifled and trapped in bad movies. His manager, Colonel Tom Parker, plans a comeback in Las Vegas. **See Pick of the Day** (2/2)

12.10 am FILM The Contractor (15, 2022) Drama with Chris Pine
1.55 Ramy Two episodes
3.10 Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r)
4.05 Location, Location, Location (r) **5.00 The Simpsons** (r)
5.50 Cheers Comedy (r)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.05 Entertainment News on 5
9.10 Secrets of the Royal Palaces Scandals from palace life (r)
10.00 Secrets of the Royal Palaces Tales of palace duty (r)
11.00 Yorkshire's Poshest Hotel: Grantley Hall Documentary (r)
12.00 pm Yorkshire's Poshest Hotel: Grantley Hall (r)
1.00 The Royals: Uncensored Insights on the royal family
2.00 Coastal Adventures with Helen, Jules & JB (r)
3.00 Coastal Adventures with Helen, Jules & JB (r)
4.00 Live UK's Strongest Man 2026 Coverage of the semi-final from Braehead Arena, Glasgow, featuring disciplines including the bar bend, Titanic compass and sack throw
6.55 5 News Weekend

Kate and her mother, Carole (8pm)

7.00 Sussex: Jewel of the South Coast A look at the discovery of a Bronze Age settlement near Hastings, while there is a visit to a pioneer who started the English wine revolution 50 years ago (3/5)

8.00 The Middletons: The Making of a Modern Queen Documentary following the Middleton family's journey from humble beginnings to their profound influence on the monarchy, all while remaining out of the public eye, and their positive role in raising their daughter Kate for her future role (r)

9.30 Kate: Our New Diana? Documentary comparing and contrasting the life and style of two Princesses of Wales — Diana, who died in 1997, and Kate, who eventually took on her title (r)

10.30 Diana & the Curse of the Spencers Documentary examining the difficult upbringing of Diana, Princess of Wales, exploring how her parents' explosive relationship shaped the child who would become a global icon (r)

12.00 am We Love Bridget Jones: All the Laughter & More (r)
1.20 Cruise TV (r) **2.20 GPs: Behind Closed Doors** (r) **3.10 Around the World in First Class** (r)
4.05 Friends (r) **4.30-5.25 Yorkshire with Jane McDonald** (r) (SL)

ITV1 Wales 7.00-8.00pm Backstage at the Eisteddfod. Highlights from the National Eisteddfod in Llantwd, Pembrokeshire **STV 1.10-5.00pm** Live STV Racing: From Ascot. The Shergar Cup **12.10-3.00am** Shop on TV **3.50-5.00am** Unwind with STV

S4C 3.00pm Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **6.20** News **6.30** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **7.30** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **8.30** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **9.30** Ffa Coffi Pawb! (r) **10.35** Dim Byd Fel Hogia'r Wyddfa **11.05-11.40** Stiwdio24/7 (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm Jungle Animal Hospital: Natural World An animal hospital in Guatemala
7.05 Life on Earth David Attenborough looks at the lives of birds
8.00 Gloria: My Life on TV Gloria Hunniford looks back at her life and career
9.00 Gloria Hunniford Remembers: Doris Day A look back on a 1995 interview
9.15 Doris Day: Pebble Mill Special Gloria Hunniford interviews the actress and singer
9.55 Wogan with Gloria Hunniford With Salman Rushdie, Aidan Quinn and Ann Hampton Callaway
10.25 The Val Doonican Music Show With Gloria Hunniford
11.10-1.05am FILM Parallel Mothers (15, 2020) Drama with Penélope Cruz and Milena Smit. In Spanish

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.25 pm The Darling Buds of May The Larkins are taken hostage (S2, ep6)
2.30 Midsomer Murders Joyce Barnaby thinks she is responsible for a man's death (S13, ep4)
4.25 Midsomer Murders A music prodigy witnesses a woman drowning (S13, ep5)
6.20 Midsomer Murders A boxer's success stirs up hidden passions (S13, ep6)
8.20 Midsomer Murders A planning dispute leads to murder. Guest starring Hugo Speer (S13, ep7)
10.15 Vera The detective investigates when a body is found on the moors, and discovers the victim was a controversial figure
12.00-2.15am Inspector Morse Lewis and Morse clash over procedure (S4, ep3)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.00pm FILM Puss in Boots (U, 2011) Animation with the voice of Antonio Banderas
8.20 Not Going Out
9.50 Mrs Brown's Boys New Year Special 2016
10.20 Mrs Brown's Boys New Year Special 2017
10.50-12.05am Ghosts Australia Three episodes

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

11.00am-2.00pm Live The Hundred: MI London Women v Trent Rockets Women
5.00 Live EFL Cup: Colchester United v Southampton (Kick-off **5.30**)
7.45 Live Zuffa Boxing Aaron McKenna v Etinosa Oliha
11.00-4.00am Live Tennis The Canadian Open

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

2.00 pm Discovering: Michael Caine
3.00 FILM Murder by Decree (15, 1978) Sherlock Holmes mystery starring Christopher Plummer
5.20 Voices of the Valleys Following three male voice choirs from across Wales
6.20 Queen: Is This the Real Life? The career of the rockers
7.30 Queen: Live at Wembley Stadium A 1986 concert featuring the band's renditions of classic hits, including *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *I Want to Break Free* and *We Will Rock You*
9.55 Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1 A compilation of the band's promos from 1973 to 1981
11.15-12.55am Queen: Greatest Video Hits 2 A collection of the band's promos

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

1.30 pm Cadfael The men of Shrewsbury vie for a widow's affections
3.05 FILM The Horse Soldiers (U, 1959) Western starring John Wayne and William Holden
5.30 Sharpe The swashbuckling soldier fakes his own death and re-enlists in the Army to weed out top-level corruption
7.45 Sharpe Having finally recovered from the death of his beloved Teresa, Sharpe marries Jane Gibbons — then rushes off to capture a fort behind French lines
10.00 EFL Carabao Cup Highlights Action from the first-round ties, including Burnley v Notts County
11.30-1.50am All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite Hard-hitting action from the world of All Elite Wrestling

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

6.45pm FILM Miss Congeniality (12, 2000) Comedy starring Sandra Bullock and Michael Caine
9.00 FILM John Wick: Chapter 2 (15, 2017) Action sequel starring Keanu Reeves and Riccardo Scamarcio
11.20 Family Guy
11.50-12.20am Family Guy

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00am Live Snooker Chinese Open Round one
10.30am-1.30pm Live AFL
2.30-5.45 Live Tour de France Women The eighth stage
8.00 Live UFC Prelims
10.00pm-1.30am Live UFC Mateusz Gamrot v Quillan Salkilld in Las Vegas, Nevada
4.00-7.00am Live AFL

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 pm A Place in the Sun Two editions
3.40 Come Dine with Me
6.20 Four in a Bed This week's competition begins at Newquay Beach Hotel
6.55 Four in a Bed The next stay is at Devon Heaven Hideaways
7.25 Four in a Bed The third visit of the week is to Tin Can Retreat
7.55 Four in a Bed The week's final visit is to The Thorverton Arms in Devon
8.25 Four in a Bed The winner is announced
9.00 24 Hours in A&E A 13-year-old arrives by helicopter after a baseball accident
10.00 24 Hours in A&E A heart attack victim undergoes an emergency procedure
11.05-12.10am 999: On the Front Line A GP calls 999 for a child suffering a severe asthma attack

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

1.00 pm Father Brown An ex-health spa employee is found murdered (S9, ep9)
2.00 New Tricks A murder investigation is reopened (S11, ep10)
3.00 New Tricks The body of a policeman is found (S12, ep1)
4.20 Miss Marple: The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side A garden party guest drinks a poisoned cocktail and promptly drops dead (S3, ep4)
7.00 The Brokenwood Mysteries A New Zealand farmer suffers a mysterious demise (S1, ep1)
9.00 Wallander Inspector Kurt Wallander investigates three apparently motiveless murders (S1, ep1)
11.00 Outrageous The family gather around Diana's bedside (5/6)
12.00-1.35am The Last Detective (S4, ep1)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics The team buy a 1972 VW Fastback
8.00 Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics
9.00 Bangers & Cash
10.00 Bangers & Cash
11.00 Bangers & Cash
12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.30pm House of the Dragon Otto schemes (S2, ep2)
7.45 House of the Dragon Grudges resurface (S2, ep3)
9.00 Possession (1/5)
10.00 Possession (2/5)
11.00 The Five-Star Weekend A storm descends (7/8)
11.45-12.45am The Five-Star Weekend Drama (8/8)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

12.55 pm Rat Race (12, 2001) Comedy with Rowan Atkinson
3.10 The Mark of Zorro (PG, 1974) Swashbuckling adventure starring Frank Langella
4.45 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem (PG, 2023) Animated fantasy with the voice of Nicolas Cantu
6.50 My Stepmother Is an Alien (15, 1988) Sci-fi comedy with Kim Basinger
9.00 Twister (PG, 1996) A storm-chaser and her estranged husband take on the dangerous task of mapping the path of a massive tornado. Action thriller with Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton
11.15-1.50am Midnight Run (18, 1988) Comedy thriller starring Robert De Niro and Charles Grodin

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.30 pm FILM Night Train to Paris (U, 1964) Crime thriller starring Leslie Nielsen
2.45 Living in a Metropolis
3.10 Whiplash
3.45 FILM I'm All Right Jack (U, 1959) Satirical comedy with Ian Carmichael and Peter Sellers
5.50 Scotland Yard
6.25 Dick Turpin Glutton arranges a marriage between Spiker and a wealthy woman
7.00 Maigret A family man is found shot
8.00 The Duchess of Duke Street The Bentinck becomes a part of the war effort
9.05 Francis Durbridge's Melissa Mystery thriller starring Peter Barkworth
10.10 Francis Durbridge's Melissa Guy Foster is implicated in the death of Mary
11.10 Eurotrash
11.45-12.20am Fortean TV

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

6.10pm A Final Landing on Iwo Jima Documentary
7.20 Hitler's Gold
8.25 Hitler's Gold
9.25 Hitler's Gold
10.25 Hitler's Gold
11.30 Weathered: Earth's Extremes With Maiya May
12.00-1.15am A Final Landing on Iwo Jima

Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

7.00pm FILM Spitfire (PG, 2018) The story of British single-seat fighter plane the Supermarine Spitfire
9.00 The Essex Murders The killing of three criminals
12.00-1.45am FILM Kings of Coke (15, 2022) The story of one of North America's most feared criminal organisations

Sunday 9

★ Picks of the day

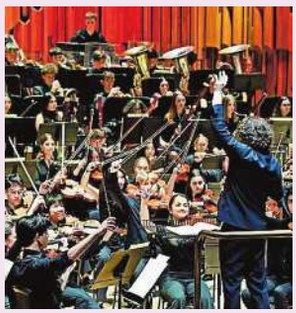
Inside Iran: War & Revolution
ITV1, 10.15pm

A harrowing view of life and death in Iran

This film combines a series of emotional eyewitness interviews and on-the-ground footage to show how Iranian people have endured their country's lethally turbulent 2026. At the start of the year, protests against the government led to a violent crackdown by the regime, a brutal suppression that resulted in thousands of deaths ("we went so we'd be shot instead of the children," says one human rights activist). This was followed by the war with the United States and Israel. Pieced together from footage filmed within Iran, this depicts the terror of the night that the protests spiralled into violence, as well as the impact of the bombardment of Tehran. It shows people caught in a geopolitical nightmare, but looking for hope. Victoria Segal

NYO at the Proms
BBC4, 8pm

The National Youth Orchestra first played at the Proms in 1955, and since 1971 the UK's prime hatchery for young classical players has been represented at nearly every season. Tonight, under the guidance of the conductor and composer Thomas Adès, more than 150 of the best junior musicians gather to raise hell at the Royal Albert Hall, performing a programme that centres on the underworld. First comes Liszt's wild-eyed Mephisto Waltz No 1, based on Nikolaus Lenau's poem *Faust*, before Adès leads the orchestra through his own Grammy-winning composition, *Dante, Part 2: Purgatorio*. The evening ends with Berlioz's opium-infused 1830 work *Symphonie Fantastique*, culminating in the grotesquerie of a witches' sabbath. Petroc Trelawny presents. **VS**



The National Youth Orchestra will perform underworld-themed works

The Rapture
BBC1, 9pm

As the apocalyptic thriller's final episode begins, Bethany (India Amarteifio) — a teenager convicted of killing her mother, and a possible visionary — has escaped from the youth psychiatric unit. Gabs (Ruth Madeley) and Dick (Iwan Rheon) learn that she has been abducted, and set off in pursuit; but the pair are also following clues in a new drawing by Bethany, which guide them to make discoveries in nearby ruins. **John Dugdale**

The Birthday Party
BBC4, 10.10pm

It was at a 1975 production of his play *The Birthday Party* that Harold Pinter met Lady Antonia Fraser. Their affair would scandalise high society, but their marriage lasted 28 years until his death in 2008. She discusses how his masterpiece changed their lives ahead of a screening of the BBC's 1987 version in which Pinter plays the menacing Goldberg alongside a cast that includes Kenneth Cranham and Julie Walters. **Joe Clay**

This week's best films on TV Pages 26-27

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.00 BBC News Headlines
10.00 Prayer and Reflection (r)
10.30 Pilgrimage: The Road Through North Wales (r)
11.30 Money for Nothing (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 BBC News; Weather
1.15 Songs of Praise How walking can have a profound purpose
1.50 FILM Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken (PG, 2023) Animated fantasy featuring the voices of Lana Condor and Jane Fonda
3.15 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out Animation (r)
3.35 The Mating Game (r)
4.35 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
5.35 BBC News Headlines
5.50 BBC Regional News; Weather
6.00 Celebrity Escape to the Country With singer and actor Chesney Hawkes (r)

Ruth Madeley in The Rapture (9pm)

7.00 Countryfile Adam Henson meets young farmers in West Sussex, including a soft fruit grower attempting to put his own mark on the family business he inherited during this year's harvest

8.00 Antiques Roadshow Fiona Bruce presents the show from Clissold Park in the London Borough of Hackney, where treasures include some pricey whisky bottles and a silver parrot ring by Mocheh Oved (r)

9.00 The Rapture ★ CCTV raises doubts over Bethany's honesty. Gabs turns to the Climate Front for help, and a new drawing leads her to the old ruins. Last in the series. **See Pick of the Day**

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.25 BBC Regional News

10.30 FILM Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (15, 2004) The hapless journalist's new romance looks set to be short-lived when she ends up serving time in a Thai prison. Comedy sequel starring Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth, Hugh Grant, Jim Broadbent, Gemma Jones and Celia Imrie

12.10 am Who Do You Think You Are? Heptathlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson travels to the Bahamas in search of her ancestry. Last in the series (r)
1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead
1.15 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.20 am A to Z of TV Gardening (r)
7.05 Glorious Gardens from Above A visit to Norfolk (r)
7.50 Countryfile (r)
8.50 Best of Weatherman Walking
9.20 Beechgrove Garden (r)
9.50 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites Dancer Oti Mabuse faces her food heaven or hell (r)
11.20 Indian Food Made Easy (r)
11.50 Indian Food Made Easy (r)
12.20 pm FILM The Man Who Knew Too Much (PG, 1956) An American doctor and his wife witness a murder while vacationing in Morocco. Alfred Hitchcock's thriller with James Stewart and Doris Day
2.15 Live Cricket: The Hundred: London Spirit Women v Birmingham Phoenix Women (Start-time **2.30**). Coverage of the match at Lord's

Stand-up with Lou Sanders (9.30pm)

6.00 Live Cricket: The Hundred: London Spirit Men v Birmingham Phoenix Men (Start-time **6.00**). Coverage of the match at Lord's. The Phoenix won by seven wickets when the teams met at Edgbaston last season, with their captain Liam Livingstone claiming the player of the match award after taking two wickets before scoring 45 off just 20 balls with the bat. Both teams ended the round-robin campaign with three wins and five defeats, but Birmingham finished two places higher in fifth due to their superior net run rate

9.30 Live at the Apollo Lou Sanders hosts, with Celya AB and Neil Delamere (3/7) (r)

10.00 FILM Inside Llewyn Davis (15, 2013) An aspiring musician struggles to make a name for himself in the New York folk scene of the early 1960s. As he pursues an audition with an influential music mogul, he comes across a series of obstacles. Coen brothers drama starring Oscar Isaac and Carey Mulligan

11.40 FILM Lady Macbeth (15, 2016) Drama starring Florence Pugh, Cosmo Jarvis and Paul Hilton

1.05 am Sign Zone: Who Do You Think You Are? Harriet Walter traces her ancestry (r) (SL)
2.05 Ann Droid Sue invites Michael and Renee to dinner (r) (SL)
2.35 The Devil in the Family: The Fall of Ruby Franke (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am James Martin's American Adventure San Antonio (r)
7.00 James Martin's Saturday Morning With Guy Martin (r)
9.25 ITV News Updates
9.30 Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh Talk show (r)
11.25 Fern Britton: Inside the Vet's
12.25 pm Tom Kerridge Cooks Italy Learning how farmers produce tomatoes for passata (r)
12.55 ITV News; Weather
1.05 Force of Nature (r)
2.05 FILM The Spy Who Loved Me (PG, 1977) James Bond spy adventure with Roger Moore
4.30 The Chase Around the World The teams land in Paris (r)
5.35 ITV News; Weather
5.45 Regional News; Weather
6.00 Force of Nature A look at how warming seas exacerbate the challenges of parenthood

Crime drama Van der Valk (8pm)

7.00 Emmerdale Charity confronts her abuser, and Dawn is left devastated

7.30 Coronation Street Bethany visits Sarah in prison, while Idris reminds Alya of his offer

8.00 Van der Valk Piet and the team are called in when an environmental campaigner is murdered on the eve of a global conference. Several potential suspects are caught on CCTV, including Cobie Stegenga, a singer who went missing and was presumed dead, but fan Eddie Suleman had a theory she just went into hiding. Either way, she is now the prime suspect in a murder investigation. Drama starring Marc Warren (2/3)

10.00 ITV News

10.15 Inside Iran: War & Revolution ★ Following protests and military conflict, this documentary reveals how Iranian citizens are risking their lives to share what actually happened inside their country. **See Pick of the Day**

11.30 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel The CEO arrives to inspect an ambitious renovation (3/6) (r)

12.00 am Shop on TV
3.00 Terror in the Skies: Stopping the Liquid Bomb Plot A look at the thwarted Al-Qaeda-linked 2006 terrorist attack (r) (SL)
4.05 Unwind with ITV
5.05 Motorsport UK (r)

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland **7.15** Sportscene: Premiership Highlights **8.30** Our Lives: Seeing with Sound (r)

9.00 Paramedics on Scene. A woman's mobility scooter plunges down an embankment **10.00** Still Game. The open road proves a nightmare for Victor (r) **10.30** Scot Squad (r) **11.00pm-Midnight** City Lights: Pure Dead Brilliant (r)

BBC1 Wales 4.35pm Scam Interceptors. A man is trapped into believing he is going to be arrested (r) **5.05-5.35** Our Lives. Cameras follow South Wales punk band the NaNaz (r) **6.00-7.00pm** Eisteddfod 2026 with Huw Stephens. Festival highlights

The best of the week's live sport

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Liam Livingstone of London Spirit Men
Sky Main Event, 6.30pm

Channel 4

6.20 am Cheers Comedy (r)
7.15 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
8.30 The Simpsons (r)
10.00 Sunday Brunch With guests Nick Helm, Delta Goodrem and JB Gill
1.00 pm Jamie Cooks the Mediterranean (r)
2.00 Our Farm Next Door: Amanda, Clive and Kids (r)
3.05 Worst House on the Street A couple try to transform a crumbling cottage into the home of their dreams (r)
4.05 Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It: Brilliant Builds (r)
4.40 FILM **Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit (PG, 1993)** A singer who once posed as a nun joins the order again to help save a Catholic school. Comedy sequel with Whoopi Goldberg
6.35 Channel 4 News

Richard E Grant's Odyssey (8pm)

7.00 Gogglebox Compilation of highlights from series 27, in which the Goggleboxers check out more of the biggest and best television (r)

8.00 Richard E Grant's Very Modern Odyssey Richard arrives on Sicily, the home of Cyclops, where he cooks with a Duchess in Palermo, climbs a volcano and discovers the secrets of a temple (2/4)

9.00 The Piano Claudia Winkleman and Mika are joined by internationally acclaimed pianist Alice Sara Ott as the search for Britain's most remarkable amateur pianists continues in Manchester

10.00 Celebrity Gogglebox Some of Britain's best-known personalities, including Clare Balding and Alice Arnold, and Denise van Outen and Johnny Vaughan, appraise the week's television (r)

11.00 FILM **How to Have Sex (15, 2023)** Coming-of-age drama about three teenage girls who head off on holiday looking for a taste of hedonism. Starring Mia McKenna-Bruce, Enva Lewis and Lara Peake

12.50 am FILM **Old (15, 2021)** Horror starring Gael Garcia Bernal
2.35 Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (SL)
3.25 Couples Come Dine with Me (r) **4.15 Fur Babies** (r) (SL)
5.10 The Dog House (r)
5.50 Countdown (r)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.05 Entertainment News on 5
9.10 FILM **PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie (U, 2023)** Animation with the voices of Mckenna Grace and Taraji P Henson
11.00 Happy Campers: The Caravan Park A family is separated (r)
12.00 pm Cruising with Susan Calman Double bill (r)
2.00 Jane McDonald in Nashville Exploring the city (1/2) (r)
3.00 Jane McDonald in Nashville The singer visits the famous Bluebird Café (2/2) (r)
4.00 Live UK's Strongest Man 2026: The Final Coverage of the final from Braehead Arena in Glasgow, featuring the truck pull, farmer's walk, motorbike Viking press, dragon egg stone and truck load
6.55 5 News Weekend

Inside the Four Seasons (9pm)

7.00 The 1970s Diet: Could It Work For You? Part two of two. Josie Gibson joins a disco-inspired dance class, and enjoys half a fish-and-chip supper that represents the typical 1970s portion size (r)

8.00 Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly Presenter Graeme Hall travels to Essex to help bring peace to a dog-friendly pub, where a Doberman's antisocial behaviour keeps riling up the regulars (r)

9.00 Inside the Four Seasons: Park Lane The concierge manager is juggling two major celebrations at Four Seasons Hampshire, a 200-guest wedding and a golden anniversary (2/5)

10.00 When Package Holidays Go Horribly Wrong Tales of disasters on vacations, including a family whose Benidorm hotel room looked like a horror film set, complete with flickering light and crumbling fixtures, and a man who found a huge lizard in the toilet in Thailand (2/5) (r)

11.35 A Very British Sex Scandal: The Earl & the Escort The murder of Lord Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley-Cooper (r)

1.00 am Cruise TV (r)
2.00 GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r)
2.50 Tom Read Wilson's Grand Tour (r) **3.45 Friends** (r)
4.30 Yorkshire with Jane McDonald (r) (SL)
5.25-5.35 Entertainment News

BBC1 Scotland 12.10am Sportscene: Premiership Highlights. Action from the latest matches (r) **1.25** Weather for the Week Ahead **1.30-6.00am** BBC News **STV 12.00-3.00am** Shop on TV **4.05-5.05am** Unwind with STV. Relaxation

S4C 5.10pm Y Fets (r) **6.10** Ralïo+ (r) **6.45** Ras Yr Wyddfa (r) **7.45** News **8.00** Am Dro! (r) **9.00** Cynefin. Heledd Cynwal, Iestyn Jones and Siôn Tomos Owen explore Nefyn (r) **10.00** Y Babell Lên (r) **10.30** Tabw (r) **11.00-11.35** Cymoedd Roy Noble (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm Eisteddfod 2026 with Huw Stephens Highlights from the festival in Llantwd, Pembrokeshire
8.00 NYO at the Proms Thomas Adès conducts the National Youth Orchestra in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. **See Pick of the Day**
9.40 The Brontës Lived Here: Writers' Houses Margaret Drabble visits the childhood home of the Brontës
10.00 Lady Antonia Fraser Remembers — The Birthday Party The author reflects on her late husband Harold Pinter's play. **See Pick of the Day**
10.10 The Birthday Party A 1987 adaptation of Harold Pinter's play starring Robert Lang and Joan Plowright
11.55-12.55am Harold Pinter: Part 1: The Room: Arena A profile

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

2.00 pm Midsomer Murders John Nettles' final appearance in the long-running series (S13, ep8)
4.00 Midsomer Murders A DJ judging a classic-car show is crushed to death (S14, ep1)
6.00 Midsomer Murders Barnaby investigates reports of a headless horseman, uncovering shocking secrets about an aristocratic family (S15, ep1)
8.00 Midsomer Murders A barrister is killed with a lethal dose of morphine and suspicion falls on an ex-convict who has recently returned to the village (S15, ep2)
10.00 Vera The detective investigates the murder of a homeless young man
11.50-12.55am Wycliffe Charles reassesses his future (S5, ep1)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.00pm EastEnders
7.30 EastEnders
8.00 EastEnders
8.30 EastEnders
9.00 FILM **You're Cordially Invited (15, 2025)** Comedy starring Will Ferrell and Reese Witherspoon
10.40-12.25am Such Brave Girls Back-to-back episodes

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

12.30pm Live SPFL
3.45 Live EFL Cup: Mansfield Town v Sheffield United
6.30 Live The Hundred: London Spirit Men v Birmingham Phoenix Men
9.00 Live PGA Tour Golf The Wyndham Championship
11.00-4.00am Live Tennis The Canadian Open

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

1.00 pm The Very Best of Peter Sellers A celebration of the comedy actor's career
2.10 Voices of the Valleys
3.10 André Rieu: Dancing Through the Skies A concert from the Semper Opera House in Dresden
5.00 Jeff Beck: Live in Tokyo The guitarist performs at the Tokyo Dome City Hall
7.00 Grand Ole Opry: Opry Live With Reba McEntire, Kathy Mattea, Suzy Bogguss, Terri Clark and Trisha Yearwood
8.00 Dire Straits: Alchemy 1983 Concert film recorded over two nights at London's Hammersmith Odeon
10.00 Johnson & Knopfler's Music Legends Brian and Mark visit Carlos Santana
11.00-12.30am Motorhead: Louder Than Everything Else

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

10.30 am Live British Touring Car Championship Coverage of the 16th, 17th and 18th races of the season, which come from Knockhill
6.00 pm Aussie Pickers Featuring a collection of Aussie memorabilia
7.00 Sharpe Despatched by Munro to kill a French colonel, Sharpe is wounded in battle and hovers at death's door
9.15 FILM **Under Siege (15, 1992)** A veteran US Navy Seal working on a battleship as a cook leaps into action to liberate the vessel from terrorists. Action adventure starring Steven Seagal and Tommy Lee Jones
11.20-12.30am The Summit Australia Sam's betrayal costs the group more than time and money

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

6.40pm FILM **Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous (12, 2005)** Comedy sequel with Sandra Bullock
9.00 The Only Way Is Essex
10.00 Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection
11.00 Family Guy
12.00-12.30am American Dad! Roger becomes a flower

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00-10.30am Live Snooker Chinese Open Coverage from round one at Riverside Sports Centre in Taiyuan
2.45-7.15pm Live Tour de France Women Coverage from the ninth and final stage
8.00 MotoGP
9.00pm-12.00m't Live MLB
1.15-4.00am Live MLB

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

2.00 pm A Place in the Sun Two editions
3.50 Come Dine with Me
6.25 Four in a Bed The competition kicks off at country inn the Fox and Hounds
6.55 Four in a Bed The rivals stay at Milberry Green Meadows glampsite in Surrey
7.25 Four in a Bed The B&Bers head to The Lord Bute in Dorset
7.55 Four in a Bed The week's final visit is to the Pocklington in the heart of Leicester
8.30 Four in a Bed Payment Day arrives
9.00 Surgeons: Life in Their Hands The lives of patients and staff at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney, Australia
10.00 24 Hours in A&E A rail worker is airlifted in after being hit by a high-speed train
11.00-12.05am 24 Hours in A&E Documentary

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

1.20 pm Call the Midwife Lucille prepares for her first day back at work (S11, ep6)
2.40 Catherine Cookson's The Round Tower Drama set in the 1950s, starring Emilia Fox as a teenager who is disenchanted with her privileged upbringing
6.00 Home Fires Pat has an important decision to make as Marek prepares to leave
7.00 Hetty Wainthropp Investigates Hetty tries to expose an arsonist (S3, ep1)
8.00 Sister Boniface Mysteries One of the screen-testing stars for the new Agent Best film is murdered (S3, ep1)
9.00 Silent Witness The body of a missing teenager is found (S23, ep2)
11.20-12.40am New Tricks Drama (S7, ep1)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm Operation Gold Rush with Dan Snow
8.00 Bangers & Cash
9.00 Bangers & Cash A series of head-turning supercharged cars head to the auction room
10.00 Canal Boat Diaries
11.00 Canal Boat Diaries
12.00-1.00am Canal Boat Diaries Robbie falls overboard

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.30pm House of the Dragon Fantasy prequel (S3, ep5)
7.45 House of the Dragon Tensions erupt (S3, ep6)
9.00 House of the Dragon Matt Smith stars (S3, ep7)
10.15 Gomorrah: The Origins Angelo makes a pact (3/6)
11.15-12.15am Gomorrah: The Origins Crime drama (4/6)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

12.40 pm My Spy (12, 2020) Comedy with Dave Bautista
2.35 Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation (U, 1962) Comedy starring James Stewart and Maureen O'Hara
4.55 10 Things I Hate About You (12, 1999) Comedy starring Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles
6.50 The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (12, 2003) Comic-book fantasy adventure, with Sean Connery
9.00 Speed (15, 1994) A cop tries to save the passengers on a bus that is wired to explode if it goes below 50mph. Action thriller starring Keanu Reeves
11.15-1.50am Kingsman: The Secret Service (15, 2015) Adventure starring Colin Firth and Taron Egerton

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.25 pm FILM **The Thirty-Nine Steps (PG, 1978)** Thriller with Robert Powell
3.30 For the Love of Ada
4.00 The Man from UNCLE Solo and Kuryakin compete with Thrush agents to get hold of a mind-reading device
5.00 The Footage Detectives A home movie short in France
6.00 FILM **This Happy Breed (U, 1944)** Drama starring Robert Newton
8.15 FILM **And Then There Were None (PG, 1974)** Ten strangers are summoned to a remote hotel in the desert of Iran, where an unseen host seeks revenge for their past misdeeds. Agatha Christie mystery starring Oliver Reed
10.15-12.05am FILM **Rentadick (PG, 1972)** Private eye spoof with Richard Briers

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

6.00pm The Anti-Soviet Fighters Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian resistance against the Soviet Union
7.15 Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation
10.55 Eclipse Across Europe
12.00-2.00am Fight to the Finish Canadian survivors talk about the Second World War

Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

6.45pm FILM **Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief (15, 2015)** The Church of Scientology's leaders
9.00 Groomed: The Truth Behind the Lie
10.00 The Salisbury Poisonings: A Spy Next Door
11.40-1.30am King of Lies: Football's Greatest Con

Monday 10

★ Picks of the day

Live European Athletics
BBC2, 7pm/BBC1, 8pm

Team GB seeks more glory in Birmingham

International competition returns to its rightful place on the BBC with Gabby Logan ably assisted by Jessica Ennis-Hill, Greg Rutherford and Jenny Meadows, and with commentary from Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe. Team GB will be hoping for another great meet as they head into the championships as the most successful nation in its history with 134 medals, of which 50 are gold. Stars of Team GB's 98-strong squad look likely to include the Olympic 800m champion Keely Hodgkinson and the Olympic silver medallist sprinter Dina Asher-Smith, *above*. Others to look out for include the 400m star Matthew Hudson-Smith and the middle-distance runner Issy Boffey. Helen Stewart

Martin and Roman's Irish Road Trip Channel 4, 8pm

Martin and Roman Kemp have often teamed up on TV before, but not for a travel series. What makes that surprising is that their big rivals as a father-and-son double act, Bradley and Barney Walsh, have made seven series of their travelogue *Breaking Dad* since 2019. Maybe the Kemps saw Ireland as the ideal country to break their duck, because it's one of the few parts of the world unvisited by the Walshes. Their odyssey begins in Cork with tourist trail sites (a stone circle), a bit of myth (a Banshee queen's local links) and some distinctive customs (storytelling, mourning). So it's all about old or timeless Ireland, with no interest shown — although

Martin and Roman Kemp make their debut as a TV travelogue double act

Martin is an actor and singer, Roman is a presenter, and both are football fans — in current music, movies, TV or sport. **John Dugdale**

House of the Dragon Sky Atlantic/Now, 9pm

Series three of the *Game of Thrones* prequel is expected to climax with the Battle of Tumbleton, the town taken over as a power base by Ormund (James Norton), and where he proclaimed Daeron as Westeros's rightful ruler. Their rebel cause has been assisted by Rhaenyra's tyrannical ways as queen. But she and her uncle and, er, husband Daemon (Matt Smith) have started to move against Ormund, setting up a climactic showdown. **JD**

Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace ITV1, 9pm

"So this is the scarf I was wrapped in to make sure I wasn't cold, because it was a very cold time of year," says Michael, holding up a knitted piece of dark green fabric that he has folded and re-folded over the 30 years since 1996 when he was found by two revellers who thought his little hand was a Halloween prank. Davina McCall, as ever, treads with care and compassion as she and the team try to find his family. **HS**

This week's best films on TV Pages 26-27

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.30 Animal Park A cheetah (r)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back A hire car not returned (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the opening session on day one, including heats in the women's 100m and 400m hurdles and the men's 800m and 400m
1.15 pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing Sarah Moore recovers plates, seats and an old wash stand
2.45 Escape to the Country (r)
3.30 The Repair Shop (r)
4.30 The Answer Run Quiz
5.15 Pointless Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

Money for Nothing (2pm)

7.00 The One Show Angellica Bell reports live from Birmingham
7.30 EastEnders Max is surprised when Priya makes a performance at the car lot
8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day one from Alexander Stadium. The women's 100m final is the concluding event of the night and it was won by Great Britain's Dina Asher-Smith two years ago. The men's 5,000m also takes place. Medals are awarded in the men's shot put and the mixed 4x400m relay. **See Pick of the Day**
10.00 BBC News at Ten
10.30 BBC Regional News
10.40 FILM Bridget Jones's Baby (15, 2016) Bridget's focus on single life and her career is interrupted when she finds herself pregnant, but with one hitch — she can only be 50 per cent sure of the identity of her baby's father after a pair of one-night stands. Comedy sequel, starring Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth, Patrick Dempsey, Emma Thompson and Sally Phillips
12.35 am Weather for the Week Ahead The latest forecast
12.40 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.30 am Bargain Hunt: 20 Years of The One Show (r) **7.15 Money for Nothing** (r) **8.00 Sign Zone: The Repair Shop** (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Trivia-based games (r)
1.30 The Finish Line Quiz (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown Staffordshire (r)
3.30 Spy in the Ocean (r)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow From Chartwell, Kent (r)
5.15 Flog It! Items at auction (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Trivia-based games (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning Former friends work to repair their broken friendship (r)

Evolution's Chris Packham (9pm)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day one, including the women's shot put final. Coverage continues on BBC One. **See Pick of the Day**
8.00 Only Connect The Double Features take on the Colonial Geese in a first-round match
8.30 University Challenge Magdalen College, Oxford takes on Warwick
9.00 Evolution Chris Packham reveals why the horse became so fast as he sets out on an odyssey that explores the evolutionary beginnings of animal movement (5/5)
10.00 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing Ferox trout (3/6) (r)
10.30 Newsnight Insights and global interviews ith Alex Forsyth
11.05 FILM Shaft (15, 1971) A tough New York private eye is drawn into a gang war when he is hired to rescue a mobster's kidnapped daughter. Blaxploitation thriller starring Richard Roundtree
12.40 am Sign Zone: Countryfile The first of four episodes exploring the lives of a new generation of farmers (r) (SL)
1.35 Bergerac Chloe finds evidence proving there is some truth in Blakely's accusations (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning Celebrity chat
1.30 pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal David Dickinson is in Blackburn, where Matt Taylor happens upon an unlikely duet, Alys Dobbie sizes up a dress, and Tim Hogarth coins it in (r)
3.00 Deal or No Deal Stephen Mulhern hosts the game show as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r)
4.00 Tipping Point Ben Shephard hosts the quiz show (r)
5.00 The Chase Bradley Walsh presents as contestants answer questions to take on one of the Chasers (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

Charity clings to her secret (8pm)

7.30 Fletchers' Family Farm The Fletchers focus on diversification (9/10) (r)
8.00 Emmerdale A villager's life is turned upside down, while Charity clings to her secret
8.30 Coronation Street Alya chooses her legal work over Speed Daal
9.00 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell help foundlings Michael and Christine uncover why their mothers abandoned them. **See Pick of the Day**
10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; Regional News
10.45 Cold Case Forensics: A Death on the Nile A forensic scientist and her team investigate the sudden death of a British solicitor while on a holiday in Egypt (2/3) (r)
11.45 Love & Death Candy retains Don Crowder as her attorney. Elizabeth Olsen stars (5/7) (r)
12.35 am Shop on TV
3.00 The Staircase In 2003, Clayton unwittingly makes a critical discovery (r) (SL)
4.10 Unwind with ITV
5.10 Dickinson's Real Deal The team are in Blackburn (r) (SL)

Variations

BBC Scotland 2.00pm-4.30 Sign Zone (r) **7.00** Reporting Scotland **7.30** The Great Food Guys (r) **8.00** The Mountain (r) **8.30** The Mountain (r) **9.00** Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr. The designers transform two shops in the town of Hay-on-Wye (r) **10.00** River City **10.30** Two Doors Down (r) **11.00** Scotcast **11.30pm-Midnight** Gary: Tank Commander (r)

BBC1 N Ireland 10.40pm Girl Fight (r) **11.10 FILM Bridget Jones's Baby (2016)** After a pair of one-night stands, the now single Bridget Jones winds up pregnant. Comedy sequel starring Renée Zellweger and Colin Firth **1.05-6.00am** BBC News

The best guide to streaming
Pages 22-24

The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls
Prime Video

Channel 4

6.30 am The King of Queens (r)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
9.10 Frasier American sitcom (r)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA In Georgetown, Texas (r)
12.05 pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway In Porthmadog, north Wales (r)
2.10 Countdown With Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 A Place in the Sun A Leicester pair seek a holiday home in Mojácar, south-east Spain (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith An exceptional attic model railway is revealed at Chavenage (r)
5.00 Château DIY A race to bring down an enormous fig tree (r)
6.00 American Pickers Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz encounter a coin-op empire (r)

Brian Conley in disguise (9pm)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Martin and Roman's Irish Road Trip New series. Martin and Roman Kemp explore Ireland, beginning in County Cork, where they visit the former prison Spike Island. **See Pick of the Day** (1/3)

9.00 Celebrity Hunted A daring escape plot is hatched in Brighton. Two of the celebs tap into a military network for intel and support. But the Hunters have picked up their signal and are closing in

10.00 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives Trewley clashes with her older sisters when they attempt to stop her going out to meet a friend, claiming she should still be subject to curfews and chaperones

11.05 Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich A bride-to-be has a non-surgical liquid nose job, while a mum-of-two tackles years of sun damage with laser technology (4/6) (r)

12.05 am Secrets of the Celebrity Sex Tapes 12.55 Hotel Hell (r) (SL) **1.50 Murder Case: The Digital Detectives** (r) (SL)
2.40 FILM **Saba (15, 2024) 4.20 Find It, Fix It, Flog It** (r) **4.40-5.50 Hollyoaks** (r) (SL)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis Discussion
12.45 pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright Debate
2.20 FILM **My Fatal Memory (12, TVM, 2022)** After an accident robs Grace of her memory, a handsome stranger enters her life, insisting they are lovers. Thriller starring Kate Watson
4.00 Castle An astronaut is murdered during a simulation for a mission to Mars (r)
4.55 Love Nature A focus on the Cornish Seal Sanctuary (r)
5.00 5 News at 5
6.00 Sardinia: Jewel of the Med Exploring the Italian island of Sardinia, its countless historic sites and an ambitious conservation project (r)
6.55 5 News with Dan Walker

Officers Dec and Lorna (8pm)

7.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders Humberside Police gets multiple calls about a potential drink driver (5/10) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Street Cops: Catching the Yobs An officer hunts down an e-biker who appears to chuck something in the bushes while running away, while a driver pulled over for speeding gets more than he bargained for

9.00 Fare Dodgers: At War with the Law Transport for London investigators hunt for a suspected prolific fare evader owing the network almost £4,000 in unpaid fares

10.00 Police Interceptors: Taking Down the Shoplifting Gangs Detectives investigate a prolific international criminal gang responsible for stealing £160,000 worth of premium goods from Asda (r)

11.05 Traffic Cops A young man who has stolen his grandfather's car leads the police on a bizarre and dangerous pursuit that ends in a trip to hospital for the driver (r)

12.05 am Car Pound Cops (r)
1.00 Cruise TV (r) **2.00 GPs: Behind Closed Doors** (r)
2.50 Castle (r) **3.40 Friends** (r)
4.30 Yorkshire with Jane McDonald (r) (SL) **5.25 Entertainment News 5.35 Children's Shows**

BBC2 N Ireland **10.00-10.30pm** Kayak ó Thuaidh (r) BBC1 Scotland **12.35am** Scotcast (r) **1.05** Weather **1.10-6.00am** BBC News ITV1 Wales **10.45-11.45pm** Deal or No Deal: Celebrity Special STV **12.35-3.00am** Shop **4.10-6.00am** Night Vision

S4C **6.00pm** Arfordir Cymru: Sir Benfro (r) **6.30-6.59** Ralïo+ (r) **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Sgwrs Dan y Lloer (r) **8.25** Garddio a Mwy. At the Royal Welsh Show **8.55** News **9.00** Cefn Gwlad **9.58** Y Tywydd **10.00** Y Deis (r) **10.30-11.35** Y Fets (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm The Architecture the Railways Built Disused Tube station Down Street (S1, ep1)
7.40 The Flying Gardener Examples of vertical gardening found in the Cotswolds
8.00 The Art of Spain The golden age of Spanish painting (2/3)
9.00 Mastermind The first heat of the 1977 run of the quiz show
9.30 Call My Bluff Game
10.00 The Sky at Night The mysteries of black holes
10.30 The Golden Age of Spanish Painting: Omnibus The artwork of the period between 1550 and 1700
11.20 One Hundred Great Paintings Zurbaran's Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose
11.35-12.35am Britain's Lost Waterlands: Escape to Swallows and Amazons Country

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.35 pm Midsomer Murders A series of incidents surrounding a new bakery ends in a murder (S23, ep3)
3.35 Classic Emmerdale
4.40 Classic Coronation Street Double bill
5.50 Heartbeat Tricia returns to work following her near-fatal heart attack
6.55 Heartbeat A series of burglaries plague Aidensfield
8.00 Midsomer Murders Bullard asks Barnaby to investigate the disappearance of a friend's daughter (S14, ep4)
10.00 Grantchester Geordie and Will investigate the suspicious death of a circus performer (S9, ep1)
11.00 Grantchester Geordie is shocked to hear Will is thinking of leaving (S9, ep2)
11.50-1.25am Trial & Retribution (S10, ep7)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60 Double bill
8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee Celebrating Mexican fashions and textiles
9.00 Top Gear: Burma Special The presenters drive lorries through the country
11.05-1.35am Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

3.00pm Live The Hundred: Trent Rockets Women v Southern Brave
6.00 Live The Hundred: Trent Rockets Men v Southern Brave Men (Start-time **6.30**)
7.45-10.30 Live EFL Cup: Plymouth Argyle v Exeter City (Kick-off **8.00**)
11.00-4.00am Live Tennis

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

2.00 pm The Alfred Hitchcock Hour
3.00 The Eighties
4.00 Discovering: Robert Shaw A profile
5.00 Portrait Artist of the Year 2022
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected
6.30 Tales of the Unexpected
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents A psychiatrist's secretary falls for a shady man
7.30 Alfred Hitchcock Presents A faith healer persuades a mechanic to become his chauffeur
8.00 André Rieu: La Vie Est Belle Featuring performances of *Auld Lang Syne* and Ravel's Boléro
9.45-12.35am FILM **Billy Elliot: The Musical (12, 2014)** Recording of the stage musical with Ruthie Henshall and Elliott Hanna

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

1.40 pm Magnum, PI
2.40 Dempsey and Makepeace
3.45 Boon Drama
4.50 The Professionals
5.55 Minder Arthur agrees to mind a coffin newly arrived at Heathrow
7.00 River Monsters A violent attack in a Mongolian river
7.30 River Monsters Deaths in America's tourist hotspots
8.00 The Motorbike Show Henry Cole and Pete "the Restorer" Thorne go on a road trip to Exmouth in East Devon
9.00 FILM **Under Siege 2: Dark Territory (18, 1995)** A former navy Seal takes on train hijackers. Action adventure sequel with Steven Seagal
11.10-12.10am Star Trek: Strange New Worlds The crew face a ravenous enemy

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

7.00pm The Floor USA Last in the game show series
8.00 The 1% Club
9.00 The Only Way Is Essex Junaid looks for a ring
10.00 Family Guy Brian learns Quagmire hates him
10.30 Family Guy
11.05 Family Guy
11.35-12.05am American Dad!

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00am-10.30 Live Snooker Chinese Open Session six from round one in Taiyuan
12.30pm-4.00 Live Snooker Chinese Open Session seven
6.00-9.30 Live Ultimate Pool Group A action in Super 8's
12.15-3.00am Live MLB: Atlanta Braves v New York Mets (Start-time **12.15**)

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 pm Come Dine with Me Parties in Kent
3.20 Four in a Bed Back-to-back editions
5.50 Car S.O.S. Tim Shaw and Fuzz Townshend restore a Porsche in terrible condition
6.50 Car S.O.S. An Austin Healey is fixed up in Co Durham
7.55 Grand Designs A couple build a contemporary farmhouse in Herefordshire
9.00 24 Hours in A&E A man is brought in with a swollen hand and a 23-year-old woman is rushed in after a car crash
10.00 24 Hours in A&E A tree surgeon who has fallen 40ft to the ground
11.05-12.05am 999: On the Front Line The service gets exceedingly busy in the early hours of Saturday morning

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

2.00 pm Classic Neighbours
2.30 Classic Neighbours
3.00 Whitstable Pearl Thriller (S1, ep2)
4.05 Lovejoy (S6, ep2)
5.20 As Time Goes By Judith goes away for the weekend (S2, ep2)
6.00 Last of the Summer Wine Compo helps his miserable nephew (S3, ep4)
6.40 Last of the Summer Wine Sid challenges Foggy to a round of golf (S3, ep5)
7.20 Last of the Summer Wine Compo's nephew is getting married (S3, ep6)
8.00 The Brokenwood Mysteries A woman is killed by an arrow (S4, ep2)
10.00 New Tricks The team reinvestigates the death of a wealthy financier (S7, ep1)
11.20-12.40am Luther The detective is framed for murder (S1, ep6)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm A Perfect Planet
8.00 Canal Boat Diaries
8.30 Canal Boat Diaries
9.00 Portillo's Empire Journey How British rule led to armed rebellion in America
10.00 Bangers & Cash
11.00 Bangers & Cash
12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.45pm The Penguin (7/8)
7.45 The Penguin (8/8)
9.00 House of the Dragon *Game of Thrones* prequel. Last in the series. **See Pick of the Day** (S3, ep8)
10.25 Possession Thriller with Gugu Mbatha-Raw (1/5)
11.25-12.30am Possession Valya struggles (2/5)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

12.55 pm Steel Magnolias (PG, 1989) Drama with Sally Field and Julia Roberts
3.15 All That Heaven Allows (U, 1955) Romantic drama starring Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson
5.00 The Enemy Below (PG, 1957) Second World War thriller with Robert Mitchum and Curt Jurgens
7.05 Dog (12, 2022) Comedy co-directed by and starring Channing Tatum
9.00 Angel Has Fallen (15, 2019) Secret Service agent Mike Banning is framed for an assassination attempt on the President, and races to clear his name. Action thriller starring Gerard Butler
11.20-1.20am Peppermint (15, 2018) Revenge thriller starring Jennifer Garner

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.30 pm FILM **Night Train to Paris (U, 1964)** Crime thriller starring Leslie Nielsen
2.45 FILM **The Men of Sherwood Forest (U, 1954)** Robin Hood adventure starring Don Taylor
4.20 FILM **I'm All Right Jack (U, 1959)** Satirical comedy with Ian Carmichael and Peter Sellers
6.25 Scotland Yard
7.00 The Footage Detectives
8.00 Maigret A rich entrepreneur is stabbed and thrown into the canal
9.50 FILM **The Weak and the Wicked (PG, 1954)** Prison drama starring Glynis Johns and Diana Dors
11.35-1.40am FILM **Murders in Cornouaille (15, 2018)** French crime thriller starring Sagamore Stévenin

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

6.10pm Digging Up Britain's Past A lost garden
7.10 Planet of the Plates
8.25 1066: A Year to Conquer England Events leading up to the Battle of Hastings
9.40 Inside Japan's War
10.50 Planet of the Plates
12.00-1.15am 1066: A Year to Conquer England

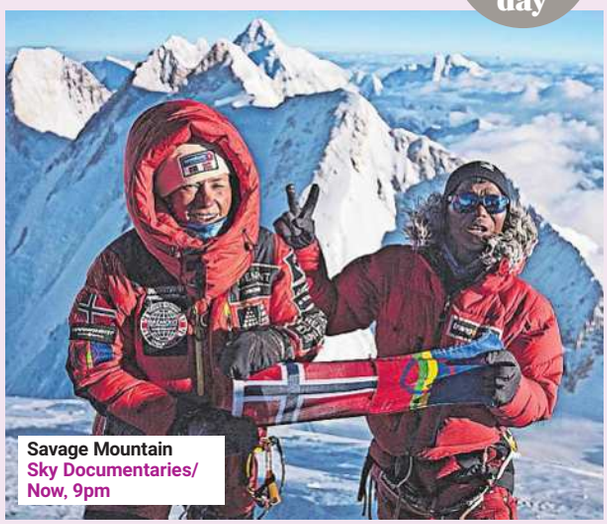
Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

6.00pm An American Bombing: The Road to April 19th Political violence
8.00 Libby, Are You Home Yet? An investigation of the 2019 murder of Libby Squire
11.00-1.20am FILM **Bowling for Columbine (15, 2002)** Exploring America's love affair with firearms

Tuesday 11

★ Picks of the day



Savage Mountain
Sky Documentaries/ Now, 9pm

Unpicking a moment of controversy on K2

"Is it hard to have a daughter like me?" Kristin Harila asks her father in 2023 as she prepares to scale all 14 of the peaks above 8,000m in less than four months. "You are living more dangerously than most people," he says. What begins as an ordinary film of extraordinary sporting endeavour — a determined woman, now 40, and her team taking on a challenge where the standard has so far mostly been set by men — disintegrates on the final ascent. On the Bottleneck, a single-file path near the summit, on K2 she encounters a dying porter, and with large numbers of climbers in front and behind the team, eventually decides to carry on, which led to criticism. She said that it would not have been possible to carry him down given the conditions. Helen Stewart

The Romans with Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman 5, 9pm

Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman's popular *Rich Lives, Poor Lives* series focuses on Roman Britain tonight, for an episode exploring the visit of Emperor Hadrian in AD122. "He was the most important person in the western world," we are informed by Rinder in terminology admirable for its accessibility if not erudition. "He wasn't just hugely powerful and worshipped as a god, he was also something of a control freak." Rinder plays the part of the governor of Britain at the time, the man responsible for making a start on Hadrian's Wall before the inspection and who appears to have viewed success as a transfer

Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman look into the visit of Emperor Hadrian

out of Londinium to somewhere warmer. Ruth Goodman investigates the lives of ordinary people living under Roman rule. **HS**

Cold Case Forensics: In the Blood ITV1, 9pm

This programme explains how justice can hang on the tiniest fibre or smallest stain. It tracks how the forensic scientist Angela Gallop and her team solved two very different cases: the 1999 killing of the Bournemouth sex shop owner Adam Shaw and the murder of Damilola Taylor in 2000. Damilola's father Richard, who died in 2024, is seen here discussing the impact Gallop's work had on his family's fight for truth. **Victoria Segal**

Gomorrah: The Origins Sky Atlantic, 9pm/10pm

Black lace veils, crucifixes, pasta Genovese: this mob-drama prequel leans in hard to its setting in 1970s Naples, outlining the early years of the crime boss Pietro Sevastano (embodied in his larval teenage form by Luca Lubrano). He faces up to maternal interference in his burgeoning gangster lifestyle and bonds himself tighter to the troubled Imma (Tullia Venezia), while alliances fracture and reform dangerously around him. **VS**

This week's best live sport Page 25

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.30 Animal Park (r)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back A family car is stolen (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the opening session on day two from Alexander Stadium, including the heats of the men's 100m and women's 800m
1.15 pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing A retro radio and a sewing machine table are rejuvenated
2.45 Escape to the Country (r)
3.30 The Repair Shop (r)
4.30 The Answer Run Quiz show
5.15 Pointless Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

EastEnders' Kim Fox (7.30pm)

7.00 The One Show Alex Jones and Roman Kemp celebrate the show's 20th birthday
7.30 EastEnders Kim and Jack try to talk Chelsea out of visiting Ian, but she's adamant
8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day two from Alexander Stadium, including the men's 100m final, plus the men's long jump and women's 100m hurdles finals. With analysis from Jessica Ennis-Hill and Greg Rutherford, and commentary by Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe
10.00 BBC News at Ten
10.30 BBC Regional News
10.40 FILM The Boys in the Boat (12, 2023) A group of underdogs, at the height of the Great Depression, are thrust into the spotlight, taking on elite rivals from around the world as part of the American rowing team at the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games. Fact-based drama, directed by George Clooney, starring Joel Edgerton, Callum Turner, Sam Strike and Peter Guinness
12.35 am Weather for the Week Ahead The latest forecast
12.40 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.15 am Homes Under the Hammer (r) **7.15 Money for Nothing** (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Great British Sewing Bee (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News Headlines
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
1.30 The Finish Line Quiz (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown Documentary (r)
3.30 Spy in the Ocean (r)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow From Sherborne School (r)
5.15 Flog It! From Basingstoke (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning A couple with a large age gap disagree on parenting (r)

Sewing Bee host Sophie Willan (8pm)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day two, including the finals of the men's hammer and women's 5,000m. Coverage continues on BBC1
8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee The sewers tackle the wide world of sport, crafting men's swimming shorts, outfits recycled from windsurf sails and personalised, made-to-measure bowling shirts (5/10)
9.00 Bloody Mary: Lucy Worsley Investigates Whether "Bloody Mary", England's first crowned queen and Henry VIII's eldest daughter, should be remembered as a pioneer or a tyrant. Last in the series (r)
10.00 Live at the Apollo Hosted by Emmanuel Sonubi (5/7) (r)
10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Matt Chorley
11.05 The Vampire Lestat: Interview with the Vampire Daniel's probing triggers a troubled Lestat, reminding him of his maker and a lost love, while Louis takes revenge (3/7)
11.55 The Vampire Lestat: Interview with the Vampire Haunted by his past, Lestat lies to Daniel and lords it over Armand (4/7)
12.45 -1.45am Sign Zone: Uncanny A man believes his house was haunted by an entity (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning Celebrity chat
1.30 pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal The team visits Peterborough, where Tracey Thackery passes on a vase that goes on to do well at auction (r)
3.00 Deal or No Deal Stephen Mulhern hosts as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r)
4.00 Tipping Point Ben Shephard hosts the quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning £10,000 (r)
5.00 The Chase Quiz show hosted by Bradley Walsh (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

Forensic scientist Angela Gallop (9pm)

7.30 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel The progress of the Langham Venice (4/6)
8.00 Emmerdale Caleb is feeling frustrated, while Billy and Dawn plan their escape
8.30 Coronation Street Tim and Sally reel from the news of Richie's murder charge
9.00 Cold Case Forensics: In the Blood ★ Forensic scientist Angela Gallop reveals how clues in blood traces helped solve two crimes, including the killing of Damilola Taylor. **See Pick of the Day** (3/3)
10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; Regional News
10.45 FILM The Spy Who Loved Me (PG, 1977) James Bond joins forces with a vengeful KGB agent, whose lover he killed, to recover missing British and Soviet nuclear submarines before whoever stole them can use their warheads. Adventure starring Roger Moore and Barbara Bach
12.55 am Shop on TV
3.00 The Summit The remaining climbers face a vote-off. Ben Shephard hosts (r) (SL)
3.50 Unwind with ITV
5.05 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace (r) (SL)

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven **7.30** My Kind of Town. Ian Hamilton heads to the Fife town of Cupar (r) **8.00** This Farming Life. Preparations are being made for winter (r) **9.00** Murder Trial: Death of a Dog Walker. A former gamekeeper is accused of the murder of a colleague (1/2) **10.00** David Wilson's Crime Files. Forensic science in crime detection (r) **11.00** Scotcast. Discussion on Scotland's biggest news stories **11.30pm-Midnight** Icons of Football. Henrik Larsson (r)
BBC1 N Ireland 10.40pm House of the Year (r) **11.10 FILM The Boys in the Boat (2023)** Fact-based drama **1.10-6.00am** BBC News

The best of the week's films on TV
Pages 26-27

Raquel Welch stars in Fantastic Voyage
Film4, 2.30pm

Channel 4

6.30 am The King of Queens (r)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
9.10 Frasier American sitcom (r)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA A New York diner (r)
12.05 pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway (r)
2.10 Countdown With Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 A Place in the Sun Jean Johansson goes house hunting in Los Cristianos (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith Secrets are unearthed at Staffordshire's Whitmore Hall (r)
5.00 Château DIY A narrow space is converted into a luxurious functional bathroom (r)
6.00 American Pickers Mike Wolfe falls for the greatest Ford pick-up he has ever seen (r)

Drama The Kid Detective (2.45am)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Dover 24/7: Britain's Busiest Port The cargo team races to unload 3,000 tons of steel, Border Force agents uncover suspicious packages and staff hold a remembrance service. Last in the series

9.00 Celebrity Hunted Two of the fugitives find themselves surrounded at a country hotel, while another pair brave exposure at a hospital appointment for preventative cancer treatment

10.00 Gogglebox The households' opinions of shows from November 2025, including *Celebrity Race Across the World*, *All's Fair*, *Squid Game: The Challenge*, *The 1% Club* and *Police Interceptors* (r)

11.05 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives Trewley clashes with her older sisters when they try to stop her going out to meet a friend, claiming that she should still be subject to curfews and chaperones (r)

12.05 am Naked Attraction (r)
1.00 Hotel Hell (r) **1.50 Walking with Orangutans** (r) (SL)
2.45 FILM The Kid Detective (15, 2020) Comedy drama (SL)
4.25 A Place in the Sun (r) **4.55 The Piano** (r) **5.50 Countdown** (r)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis Discussion
12.45 pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright Debate on the day's biggest stories
2.20 FILM Danger Rocks the Cradle (PG, TVM, 2022) When a pregnant high school senior disappears her teacher begins to worry that the teenager may have been taken against her will. Thriller starring Devin Cecchetto
4.00 Castle A Hong Kong detective works with Beckett and Castle. Guest starring Linda Park (r)
4.55 Love Nature (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Corfu: Jewel of the Med Actress Joanna Lumley narrates a profile of Corfu (r)
6.55 5 News Update

Inside Longleat (8pm)

7.00 The Yorkshire Vet: At Home with the Greens A woman takes the oldest of her 13 cats to Peter's surgery for a check-up (3/4) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Inside Longleat Cameras follow a bat conservation team and a group of moth enthusiasts as they both carry out annual surveys, but things are not quite going to plan

9.00 The Romans with Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman ★ Rob and Ruth delve into 122 AD, when the Emperor Hadrian made a dramatic visit to Roman Britain, a moment that would change the fortunes of rich and poor alike. **See Pick of the Day**

10.30 The Bomb on the Boat: The Murder of Lord Mountbatten A look at the events surrounding the killing of Louis Mountbatten in August 1979, when his boat was blown up at sea by the IRA off the west coast of the Republic of Ireland. Royal insiders, local journalists and victims' family members recall the attack minute by minute (r)

12.05 am Serial Killer Wives (r)
1.00 Cruise TV (r)
2.00 GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r)
2.50 Castle (r) **3.40 Friends** (r)
4.30 Yorkshire with Jane McDonald (r) (SL)
5.25-5.35 Entertainment News

BBC1 Scotland 7.00-7.30pm River City. Alex forges ahead with his plan to kill Viv (r) **12.35am** Scotcast (r) **1.05** Weather for the Week Ahead **1.10-6.00am** BBC News
STV 12.55-3.00am Shop on TV **3.50-6.00am** Night Vision. News and sport

UTV 7.30-8.00pm Life Times **S4C 6.00pm** Y Ci Perffaith (r) **6.30-6.59** Codi Hwyl (r) **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Pobol y Cwm **8.25** Nol o'r Dibyn gyda Iolo Williams (r) **8.55** News **9.00** Sioe Môn 2026 **10.00** Iaith ar Daith **11.00-12.05am** Y Cosmos (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm The Architecture the Railways Built The Ffestiniog railway in north Wales
7.40 The Flying Gardener From Dumfries and Galloway
7.55 To the Manor Born Audrey leaves Grantleigh Manor
8.30 Keeping Up Appearances Hyacinth concocts an elaborate plan
9.00 Ardal O'Hanlon: Tomb Raider The actor explores major archaeological finds in Ireland's history
10.00 Kamikaze: An Untold History Japanese and US veterans reflect on the impact of the suicide missions
11.30 The Sky at Night Professor Brian Cox joins the team to explore the mysteries of black holes
12.00-1.00am The Wildest Weather in the Universe: Horizon

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.35 pm Midsomer Murders A dominoes player is found dead (S23, ep4)
3.35 Classic Emmerdale
4.05 Classic Emmerdale
4.40 Classic Coronation Street Double bill
5.50 Heartbeat A jealous husband disrupts the sheepdog trials
6.55 Heartbeat An armed robber targets the auction house
8.00 Vera DCI Stanhope investigates a murder at a remote country house, but no sooner does she arrive, than a second body is discovered
10.00 Grantchester Geordie gets off on the wrong foot with the new vicar (S9, ep3)
11.00 Grantchester A body is found in a basement (S9, ep4)
11.50-1.20am Trial & Retribution The team look for the missing nanny (S10, ep8)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.05pm Spud Comedy drama **7.25 FILM Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (15, 2001)** Adventure **9.00 RuPaul's Drag Race UK: Meet the Queens** **9.20 FILM Bridget Jones's Diary (15, 2001)** Comedy **10.55-12.35am FILM Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (15, 2004)** Comedy sequel

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

3.00pm Live The Hundred: Manchester Super Giants Women v Sunrisers Leeds Women (Start-time **3.00**) **6.00-9.30 Live The Hundred: Manchester Super Giants Men v Sunrisers Leeds Men** (Start-time **6.30**) **11.00-4.00am Live Tennis** Day 10 of the Canadian Open

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

2.00 pm The Alfred Hitchcock Hour
3.00 The Eighties
4.00 Discovering: Rex Harrison
5.00 Portrait Artist of the Year 2022
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected
6.30 Tales of the Unexpected
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents A woman is forced to drive a murderer to safety
7.30 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
8.00 The World in a Painting: Ingres' Diamond A look at the events that led to a portrait featuring a diamond ring
9.15 Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs Examining the most sensational thefts of ancient masterpieces in history
10.15 Wonderland: Gothic
11.15-12.15am The Movies

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

1.30 pm Magnum, PI Thomas is shot
2.35 Dempsey and Makepeace A shooting scares Makepeace
3.45 Boon An ex-convict targets a family
4.50 The Professionals Bodie and Doyle try to defuse an atom bomb
5.50 Minder Arthur gets mixed up in narcotics
7.00 The Motorbike Show Henry Cole buys a couple of bikes for a road trip on a budget
8.00 King of the Roads County Antrim in Northern Ireland hosts the Armoy Race of Legends
9.00 Ice Road Truckers Lisa Kelly and Tony Molesky transport the biggest loads of the season so far
10.00 All Elite Wrestling: Collision The latest hard-hitting action
12.00-12.55am Dark Side of the Ring

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

7.00pm The Floor Game show hosted by Rob Brydon
8.00 The 1% Club
9.00 Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection Olivia spends six days in the cut-price surgery capital of the world, Istanbul
10.00 Family Guy
11.35-12.05am American Dad!

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00-10.30am Live Snooker Chinese Open Coverage from round one at Riverside Sports Centre in Taiyuan **12.30-4.00pm Live Snooker Chinese Open** Coverage from round one of the tournament **12.00-3.00am Live MLB: New York Yankees v Seattle Mariners** (Start-time **12.05**)

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 pm Come Dine with Me From Devon
3.20 Four in a Bed
5.50 Car S.O.S. The boys head to Essex to fix a Lotus Esprit S1
6.50 Car S.O.S. Tim and Fuzz take on a 1973 saloon which has spent decades in a dusty barn
7.55 Grand Designs An intrepid pair want to build a Kiwi-style hill house in Worcestershire
9.00 Oti and Richard's South African Odyssey Oti and Richard's journey concludes in the Eastern Cape. Last in the series
10.00 24 Hours in A&E A 51-year-old is airlifted in after falling 20ft from a ladder
11.05-12.05am 24 Hours in A&E An actor with a suspected broken shoulder receives a worrying diagnosis

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

2.00 pm Neighbours
3.00 Whitstable Pearl Crime drama (S1, ep3)
4.05 Lovejoy Tinker's odd behaviour causes concern (S6, ep3)
5.20 As Time Goes By
6.00 Last of the Summer Wine (S3, ep7)
6.35 Last of the Summer Wine (S4, ep1)
7.20 Last of the Summer Wine The trio work in the cafe (S4, ep2)
8.00 'Allo 'Allo! Helga tells Von Strohm that the stolen money was forged
8.35 'Allo 'Allo! Herr Flick arrests Leclerc, while Edith is in a romantic mood
9.05 'Allo 'Allo! René narrowly escapes 258 exploding Christmas puddings
9.40 New Tricks The team investigates the death of a college professor (S7, ep2)
11.00-12.15am Luther Thriller (S2, ep1)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm A Perfect Planet The solar force that powers Earth **8.00 Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics** The team fall for a Subaru Pick-up **9.00 Bangers & Cash** **10.00 Bangers & Cash** **11.00 Bangers & Cash** **12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics**

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.50pm House of the Dragon Fantasy prequel (S1, ep1&2) ✪ **9.00 Gomorrah: The Origins** Italian drama series. **See Pick of the Day** (5/6) ✪ **10.00 Gomorrah: The Origins** Angelo suffers a blow. **See Pick of the Day** (6/6) **11.00-12.15am House of the Dragon** Fantasy (S3, ep1)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

12.45 pm The Black Swan (PG, 1942) Swashbuckling adventure, with Tyrone Power
2.30 Fantastic Voyage (U, 1966) Sci-fi adventure starring Raquel Welch
4.35 The Kid Who Would Be King (PG, 2019) Fantasy adventure starring Louis Ashbourne Serkis
7.05 See How They Run (12, 2022) Mystery comedy starring Sam Rockwell and Saoirse Ronan
9.00 Missing (15, 2023) When her mother goes missing while on vacation with her new boyfriend, June searches for answers. Thriller starring Storm Reid
11.15-1.20am Jennifer's Body (15, 2009) Comedy horror starring Megan Fox and Amanda Seyfried

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.30 pm FILM Doctor in Distress (PG, 1963) Hospital comedy starring Dirk Bogarde
3.35 Kim Novak: The Golden Age Rebel The private life of the Hollywood icon
4.40 FILM Whispering Smith Hits London (PG, 1952) Crime drama starring Richard Carlson
6.25 Whiplash Cobb worries he is assisting in a kidnapping
6.55 The Man from UNCLE Solo and Kuryakin compete with Thrush agents to get hold of a mind-reading device
7.55 Buccaneer Burton's murky past starts to interest Monica
9.00 FILM Murder by Decree (15, 1978) Sherlock Holmes tries to put a stop to Jack the Ripper's murders. Mystery starring Christopher Plummer
11.35-12.10am Fortean TV

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

6.15pm Digging Up Britain's Past A preserved Roman site **7.15 Eclipse Across Europe** **8.25 1066: A Year to Conquer England** King Harold has to take on two invasion forces **9.40 Inside Japan's War** **10.50 Eclipse Across Europe** **12.00-1.15am 1066: A Year to Conquer England**

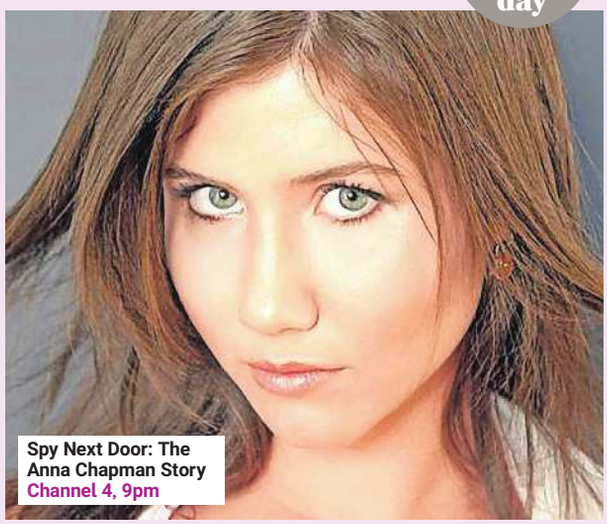
Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

7.00pm FILM Touching the Void (15, 2003) The terrifying journey of two mountaineers ✪ **9.00 Savage Mountain** The story of Kristin Harila's record-breaking climb of the world's 14 highest mountains. **See Pick of the Day** **11.00-1.00am FILM Lancaster (PG, 2022)** Documentary

Wednesday 12

★ Picks of the day



Spy Next Door: The Anna Chapman Story
Channel 4, 9pm

The spy who seduced London society

It seems unbearably quaint now, but in the early 2000s people started to believe that the Cold War was over. Yet intelligence professionals remained alert to the spy networks. This two-part documentary tells the story of Anna Chapman, *above*, a businesswoman and model turned Russian spy who — via a marriage with a British man — embedded herself in the world of UK high finance before a 2009 move to Manhattan. FBI agents describe how they tracked her through New York's coffee shops and department stores, while other contributors include Roderic Lyne, the former British ambassador to Russia, and Marina Litvinenko, the widow of the poisoned dissident Alexander Litvinenko. Victoria Segal

Murder Trial
BBC2, 9pm

In 2024 Brian Low, a former country estate groundsman, was shot dead while walking his dog in rural Perthshire. The chief suspect was Low's neighbour David Campbell, a gamekeeper who worked on the same estate as Low. This edition of *Murder Trial* returns to the Scottish High Court to follow Campbell's trial, where missed forensic opportunities mean the prosecution case rests on circumstantial evidence. A section of Campbell's home CCTV was deleted on the night in question and his doorbell camera was covered with tape on the morning of the crime. There is also CCTV revealing a figure on an ebike carrying a shotgun-shaped bag

Murder Trial revisits the killing of Brian Low in 2024

on the route from Campbell's house to the crime scene. Will the jury be convinced the man on the ebike was Campbell? **Joe Clay**

Live Pre-Season Football
ITV1, 7pm

The World Cup was one thing but have we reached peak football as ITV devotes an evening to a pre-season warm-up match? The Premier League season starts on August 21, but tonight Manchester United and Leeds United take part in a friendly (kick-off 7.30pm), the northern rivals playing at the 82,300-capacity Croke Park stadium in Dublin — this is the first football fixture at this venue since 2009 when Ireland lost 1-0 to France. **JC**

Extraordinary Extensions
Channel 4, 8pm

Two more extensions for the rapper Tinie Tempah to follow, starting with a "radical mash-up" of a B&B in Canterbury. There are Norwegian and Korean influences in the project, reflecting the nationalities of the owners. And the dig unearths a Second World War bomb shelter, which they turn into a speakeasy. Afterwards a Miss Vintage UK finalist transforms her bungalow in Nottingham into a 1960s Hollywood time capsule. **JC**

This week's seven-day radio guide Pages 42-43

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.30 Animal Park (r)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back Hunting down a car being smuggled to Romania (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Jeanette Kwakye presents coverage of the opening session on day three from Alexander Stadium, including the first three disciplines of the decathlon
1.15 pm BBC News; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing
2.45 Escape to the Country (r)
3.30 The Repair Shop (r)
4.30 The Answer Run Quiz
5.15 Pointless Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

Airborne thriller Red Eye (11.10pm)

7.00 The One Show The 20th birthday celebrations continue
7.30 EastEnders Chelsea's family rally together, and Eve faces a new challenge
8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day three from Alexander Stadium, including the finals of the men's 400m and women's 400m hurdles. Plus, the women's hammer final reaches a conclusion, and the evening draws to a close with the men's 110m hurdles final
10.00 BBC News at Ten
10.30 BBC Regional News
10.40 MOTD: Uefa Super Cup Highlights Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa
11.10 FILM Red Eye (12, 2005) A hotelier on a flight to Miami realises a passenger she has befriended is intent on involving her in a political assassination. Thriller starring Rachel McAdams and Cillian Murphy
12.25 am The Hit List Celebrity Special (r)
1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead
1.15 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.15 am Homes Under the Hammer (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Great Japanese Railway Journeys (r) (SL)
8.30 Great Continental Railway Journeys (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 House of Games (r)
1.30 The Finish Line Quiz (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown (r)
3.30 Spy in the Ocean (r)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow First shown in 2003 (r)
5.15 Flog It! (r)
6.00 House of Games (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning Documentary (r)

British drama Kindling (12.05am)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day three, including the start of the women's hammer final. Coverage continues on BBC1
8.00 The Repair Shop Experts restore a photo of President Kennedy's children with their English nanny, a tiny drum kit clock, a melted wax statuette and a traditional Venezuelan stringed instrument (r)
9.00 Murder Trial ★ In 2024, Brian Low is found dead in rural Scotland, and former gamekeeper David Campbell stands accused of his murder. **See Pick of the Day** (1/2)
10.00 Inside No 9 (4/6) (r)
10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis with Katie Razzall
11.05 Evolution Chris Packham reveals why the horse become so fast as he sets out on an odyssey that explores the evolutionary beginnings of animal movement (5/5) (r)
12.05 am FILM Kindling (12, 2023) Drama starring George Somne and Conrad Khan
1.35 Sign Zone: Amityville: An Origin Story The Lutz family turn their story into book and film (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning Celebrity chat
1.30 pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal The team heads to Grimsby, where Simon Schneider falls in love with a beautiful necklace (r)
3.00 Deal or No Deal Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r)
4.00 Tipping Point Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase Quiz show (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

Man Utd's Bryan Mbeumo (7.30pm)

7.00 Live Pre-Season Football: ★ Manchester United v Leeds United (Kick-off **7.30**). Hugh Woozencroft presents coverage of the friendly at Croke Park in Dublin. Normally used for Gaelic sports, this is the first time this 80,000 capacity venue has hosted a club association football match, and while a friendly in name, it is likely to be a highly competitive contest given the historic rivalry between the teams. With analysis from John O'Shea and Michael Brown, commentary by Sam Matterface and Lucy Ward. **See Pick of the Day**
9.50 It'll Be Alright on the Night Television clangers featuring Joel Dommett, Romesh Ranganathan and Ant & Dec
10.20 ITV News at Ten; Weather; Regional News
11.05 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell help foundlings Michael and Christine uncover why their mothers abandoned them (r)
12.05 am Shop on TV
3.00 Love & Death (r) (SL)
3.55 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel (r) (SL)
4.20 Unwind with ITV
5.35 Tom Kerridge Cooks Italy Making passata (r) (SL)

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven **7.30** Scotland's Home of the Year 2024 (r) **8.00** Island Crossings (r) **9.00** Black Black Oil (r) **10.00** River City. Tommy collapses after being diagnosed with a concussion **10.30** Icons of Football. A profile of former Scotland captain Gary McAllister (r) **11.00** Scotcast **11.30pm-Midnight** Trials That Shocked Scotland (r)

BBC1 Wales 11.10pm Undercover: Cancer Cure or Con? (r) **11.30-12.45am FILM Red Eye (2005) BBC1 N Ireland 10.40pm** The Big Deal with Steph McGovern **11.40** MOTD: Uefa Super Cup **12.10am FILM Red Eye (2005) 1.30-6.00am** BBC News

The best guide to streaming
Pages 22-24

Alan Ritchson stars in season four of Reacher
Prime Video

Channel 4

6.30 am The King of Queens (r)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
9.10 Frasier American sitcom (r)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA Gastropub Bask 46 in New Jersey (r)
12.05 pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway (r)
2.10 Countdown With Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 A Place in the Sun Property on Spain's Costa Almería (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith Four visitors go on a night-time ghost hunt in Britain's most haunted castle (r)
5.00 Château DIY Love is in the air at Chateau de Sauge (r)
6.00 American Pickers Frank Fritz spots a Harley-Davidson "knucklehead" (r)

Presenter Tinie Tempah (8pm)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Extraordinary Extensions A couple start to renovate a Canterbury B&B by adding an extension — only to find a bomb shelter in the garden. **See Pick of the Day**

9.00 Spy Next Door: The Anna Chapman Story The story of Anna Chapman, the British businesswoman and model unmasked by the FBI in 2010 as part of a Russian spy ring. **See Pick of the Day**

10.00 24 Hours in A&E Patients' relatives explain how they have faced challenges together (3/10) (r)

11.05 999: On the Front Line The paramedics plan to take a woman is in the advanced stages of labour to hospital, but when her waters break, they have to think again (r)

12.10 am Celebrity Hunted (r) (SL)
2.00 Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (SL)
2.50 Dover 24/7 (r) (SL)
3.45 Fur Babies (r) (SL)
4.40 Kirstie's House of Craft (r)
4.55 Couples Come Dine with Me (r) **5.50 Countdown** (r)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis Discussion
12.45 pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright Debate
2.20 FILM Deadly Secrets (PG, TVM, 2023) When a woman finds out about her mother's financial problems, she commits a series of high-profile burglaries to pay off her mother's debts. Thriller starring Lizzie Boys
4.00 Castle Detective Ryan ends up in the middle of an assassination plot (r)
4.55 Love Nature An edible forest garden in Co Down (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Sicily: Jewel of the Med Cameras focus on the largest island in the Mediterranean (r)
6.55 5 News Update

Operational manager Antonia (8pm)

7.00 Car Pound Cops Tracking cars as they are seized for a variety of offences (7/8) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts New series. A 82-year-old is brought to Barnsley Casualty after suffering a fall in her kitchen

9.00 999: Critical Condition A woman fights for her life after an unexplained collapse, and an 82-year-old's life is at risk of pneumonia after sustaining multiple chest injuries

10.00 Ambulance: Code Red Medical professionals treat a man who has collapsed at the wheel of his car, a 72-year-old with an open fracture and a 22-year-old suffering from a prolonged epileptic seizure (r)

11.05 Cause of Death A homeless man is found dead in his temporary accommodation in Blackburn (9/10) (r)

12.05 am A&E After Dark (r) **1.00 Cruise TV** (r) **2.00 GPs: Behind Closed Doors** (r) **2.50 Castle** (r) **3.40 Friends** (r)
4.35 Cruising with Susan Calman (r) (SL) **5.25 Entertainment News 5.35 Children's Shows**

BBC1 Scotland **12.25am** Scotcast (r) **12.55** The Hit List (r) **1.40** Weather **1.45-6.00am** BBC News **STV** **12.05-3.00am** Shop **4.20-5.35am** Unwind **UTV** **11.05pm** UTV at the Fleadh **11.35-12.05am** Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel (r)

S4C **6.00pm** Dan Do (r) **6.30-6.59** Adeiladu'r Freuddwyd: Camp Out West (r) **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Pobol y Cwm. Eleri plans a surprise for Jinx **8.25** Cartrefi Cymru (r) **8.55** News **9.00** Sioe Môn 2026 **10.00** Y Deis (r) **10.30-11.35** Ty Ffit (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm Villages by the Sea Ben Robinson visits Culross in Fife (S4, ep1)
7.30 Wainwright Walks Climbing Castle Crag in Borrowdale Valley, Cumbria (S1, ep3)
8.00 The Treasures of Ancient Rome Alastair Sooke explores ancient Roman art (3/3)
9.00 Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit The scholar explores the physical world of the Roman Empire (2/4)
10.00 I, Claudius Piso and his wife Plancina are charged with murder (5/12)
10.50 I, Claudius Lollia commits suicide (6/12)
11.45-12.45am The Treasures of Ancient Rome Alastair Sooke explores ancient Roman art (3/3)

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.35 pm Midsomer Murders The death of an ancient estate's patriarch leads to murder (S24, ep1)
3.35 Classic Emmerdale
4.40 Classic Coronation Street Double bill
5.50 Heartbeat A dangerous criminal roams Aidensfield
6.55 Heartbeat A dispute over a right of way gets out of hand
8.00 Midsomer Murders A farmer is found dead in Midsomer Mow (S14, ep5)
10.00 Grantchester A murder at Esme's office sends shockwaves through the Keating family (S9, ep5)
11.00 Grantchester A professor of archaeology is found murdered at a dig site (S9, ep6)
11.50-1.25am Trial & Retribution (1/2) Drama (S10, ep9)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60
8.00 Top Gear Double bill
10.00 Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee A fresh panel of comedians try to Spell the Difference
10.50 Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee
11.35-12.25am This Country

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

11.30am Live The Hundred: Welsh Fire Women v London Spirit Women
2.30pm Live The Hundred: Welsh Fire Men v London Spirit Men (Start-time **3.00**)
6.00-9.30 Live The Hundred: Birmingham Phoenix Men v MI London Men
11.00-4.00am Live Tennis

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

2.00 pm The Alfred Hitchcock Hour
3.00 The Eighties
4.00 Discovering: Yul Brynner
5.00 Portrait Artist of the Year 2022
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
7.30 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
8.00 Voices of the Valleys Pressure mounts on the Welsh male voice choirs as three major events draw nearer
9.00 Battle of the Irish Dancers Following preparations for the Irish Dancing Championships
10.00 The Eighties America's economic growth throughout the decade
11.00 The Art of Architecture
12.00-2.00am The Pilgrimage of Gilbert & George

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

1.35 pm Magnum, PI
2.35 The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes An enigmatic woman goes missing
3.45 Boon Drama
4.50 The Professionals An assassin comes to town
5.50 Minder Terry takes a job at a strip club
6.55 Aussie Pickers Lucas Callaghan and Adam McDonald visit Tasmania
8.00 King of the Roads The Armoy Race of Legends
9.00 FILM RoboCop 2 (18, 1990) The cyborg law enforcer battles a deranged drug lord, unaware the corporation that created him is planning to replace him. Sci-fi thriller sequel starring Peter Weller and Nancy Allen
11.15-1.15am All Elite Wrestling: Collision

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

7.00pm The Floor
8.00 The 1% Club Quiz, hosted by Lee Mack
9.00 Family Guy
9.30 Family Guy
10.00 Family Guy
10.30 Family Guy
11.05 Family Guy
11.35-12.05am American Dad! Animated comedy

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00am-10.30 Live Snooker Chinese Open Round two
12.30pm-4.00 Live Snooker Chinese Open Round two
7.00 Live Uefa Super Cup: Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa (Kick-off **8.00**)
10.30 Beacon of Hope
11.30 MLB Plays of the Week
12.00-3.00am Live MLB

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 pm Come Dine with Me In Sheffield
3.20 Four in a Bed
3.50 Four in a Bed
4.20 Four in a Bed
4.50 Four in a Bed
5.20 Four in a Bed
5.50 Car S.O.S
6.50 Car S.O.S Tim and Fuzz take on possibly their most obscure car to date
7.55 Grand Designs Kevin McCloud meets a couple building a home on a 16-acre plot in Lincolnshire
9.00 The Roman Empire by Train with Alice Roberts Alice heads seven miles south of Naples to Herculaneum
10.00 24 Hours in Police Custody Bedfordshire Police investigate a knife and gun attack on the doorstep of a man's house
11.05-12.10am 24 Hours in A&E A builder breaks his neck

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

2.00 pm Classic Neighbours
3.00 Whitstable Pearl (S1, ep4)
4.10 Lovejoy (S6, ep4)
5.20 As Time Goes By (S2, ep4)
6.00 Last of the Summer Wine (S4, ep3-5)
8.00 The Chelsea Detective The owner of a fruit and vegetable delivery company is found stabbed in his own home (S2, ep7)
9.00 The Chelsea Detective Investigations reveal that Kai had broken into Jack's house to steal his drugs and take them to another dealer (S2, ep8)
10.00 New Tricks A paedophile confesses to the murder of a child 25 years previously (S7, ep3)
11.20-12.40am Luther Jenny's boss seeks revenge (S2, ep2)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm A Perfect Planet
8.00 Michael Palin: Travels of a Lifetime A look back at the making of *Pole to Pole*
9.00 Simon Reeve's South America Bolivia
10.00 Bangers & Cash
11.00 Bangers & Cash
12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.35pm House of the Dragon Rhaenyra faces the prospect of marriage (S1, ep3)
7.45 House of the Dragon Daemon returns to Kings Landing (S1, ep4)
9.00 House of the Dragon Last in the series (S3, ep8)
10.25-12.25am Station Eleven (5&6/10)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

1.05 pm Sign of the Pagan (U, 1954) Historical drama starring Jack Palance
2.55 The Comancheros (PG, 1961) Western starring John Wayne
5.05 They Rode West (U, 1954) Western with Robert Francis and Donna Reed
6.50 Fisherman's Friends: One and All (12, 2022) Comedy sequel starring James Purefoy
9.00 Mission: Impossible: Rogue Nation (12, 2015) The agents of the Impossible Mission Force become fugitives in order to bring down a shadowy society of assassins. Spy thriller sequel with Tom Cruise and Jeremy Renner
11.40-1.50am The Rhythm Section (15, 2020) Thriller starring Blake Lively and Jude Law

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.30 pm Carrie's War Children's drama starring Pauline Quirke
3.20 Look at Life
3.45 Dial 999 An outbreak of organised violence mystifies the police
4.15 FILM Robbery Under Arms (U, 1957) Period action adventure starring Peter Finch
6.15 Melbourne Cleaners
6.30 Give Us a Clue
7.00 Out of Town Jack Hargreaves visits Parsonage Down on Salisbury Plain
7.30 Travelling Man Lomax finally catches up with the man who framed him
8.35 FILM Brighton Rock (PG, 1948) Thriller starring Richard Attenborough
10.25-12.15am FILM Up the Chastity Belt (PG, 1971) Medieval comedy starring Frankie Howerd

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

7.15pm Athens: Birth of Democracy
8.25 1066: A Year to Conquer England Duke William leads his fleet across the Channel
9.40 Inside Japan's War
10.50 Athens: Birth of Democracy
12.00-1.15am 1066: A Year to Conquer England

Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

6.55pm Burden of Proof: Who Killed Jennifer Pandos?
8.00 Six Silent Killings: Ireland's Vanishing Triangle Two-part documentary
10.00 Groomed: The Truth Behind the Lie
11.00-1.15am FILM Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief (15, 2015)

Thursday 13

★ Picks of the day

A House Through Time
BBC2, 9pm

A lot of history in one Edinburgh home

David Olusoga's series returns with a four-parter exploring a house in Edinburgh. Built in 1765, it looks down on the Scottish capital from Calton Hill, and was home to the aspirational middle class rather than the elite. Once again drawn to how political, economic and social developments shaped individual lives, Olusoga, *above with Dr Kate Lister*, looks initially at residents — a priest who helped French prisoners to escape from Edinburgh Castle, an agent spying on striking weavers — who took sides for or against radical movements in the 1780s and 90s. Also in the spotlight are the Steells, a father and son who exploited their craft skills in different ways; John as a useless businessman, John Jr as a famous sculptor. John Dugdale

The Big Deal with Steph McGovern BBC2, 8pm

Evangelical about demystifying the art trade and opening it up to outsiders, Steph McGovern hosts a six-part contest (prize: art worth £50,000) in which seven amateur duos have a go at flogging paintings. Also guided by "the overarching series expert" Cordelia de Freitas and her one-off sidekicks, the wannabes' first challenge is to pick four works with commercial potential at a graduation show. Then they must coax the student artists into having know-nothing dealers (this feels phoney) before spouting art tosh at the auction preview, and hoping they have chosen the right pieces and the right "reserve" for each one at the sale. Slightly comically, part one ends with a glorified version of a daytime antiques show's climax. **JD**

Steph McGovern hosts a contest for budding art dealers

The Yorkshire Vet Special Channel 5, 8pm

The dream for the veterinarian Peter Wright is setting up places where animal lovers can remember their dead pets. He heads to Sussex to visit the UK's first designated animal chaplain, Maria Brett, and her church's pet memorial garden, before returning to Yorkshire to create something similar. Wright also goes to the Howardian Hills National Landscape, one of the locations where he plans to place pet memorial benches. **Joe Clay**

The Coen Brothers Story BBC4, 9pm

In 1984 the Coen brothers emerged fully formed with *Blood Simple*, a twist-filled film noir that would set the template for their future classics such as *Fargo* (1996) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007). This update of Sarah Aspinall's 2000 documentary explores their cinematic world and the journey that gave rise to this unique vision, with contributions from actors who have worked with the duo, including George Clooney, Jeff Bridges and Tilda Swinton. **JC**

This week's streaming guide Pages 22-24

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.30 Animal Park (r)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back Tracking a stolen hire car (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Jeanette Kwakye presents coverage of the opening session on day four from Alexander Stadium, including the women's 800m and 400m semi-finals
1.15 pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing
2.45 Escape to the Country (r)
3.30 The Repair Shop Restoring a rugby shirt and a map (r)
4.30 The Answer Run Quiz show
5.15 Pointless Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

Presenter Gabby Logan (8pm)

7.00 The One Show Alex Jones and Roman Kemp continue the 20th birthday celebrations
7.30 EastEnders Amy confides in an unlikely source, and Ian ends up in a worrying situation
8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Further coverage of the evening session on day four from Alexander Stadium, including the women's 200m final. The decathlon concludes with the 1500m, and medals are awarded in the women's triple jump, pole vault and 3,000m, and the men's discus and 800m. With commentary by Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe
10.00 BBC News at Ten
10.30 BBC Regional News
10.40 FILM Yesterday (12, 2019) A struggling musician wakes up after being hit by a bus to find he is the only person in the world who remembers the Beatles. Comedy with Himesh Patel and Lily James. Directed by Danny Boyle
12.30 am Alan Carr's Picture Slam Game show, with contestants from Coventry, London and Glasgow attempting to identify a board full of images (r)
1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead
1.20 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.30 am The Bidding Room (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Gardeners' World Damson Farm in Bath (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News Headlines
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
1.30 The Finish Line Quiz show (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart Geological forces (r)
3.35 Spy in the Ocean (r)
4.35 Vintage Antiques Roadshow From Dunrobin Castle (r)
5.15 Flog It! From Co Durham (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning A woman who wants to repair her bond with her daughter (r)

Red Dwarf's Rimmer (10pm)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day four, including the start of the women's triple jump and pole vault finals. Coverage continues on BBC1
8.00 ★ The Big Deal with Steph McGovern New series. Budding art dealers compete to spot talent, negotiate deals and make a profit for the chance to win £50,000 in art. **See Pick of the Day** (1/6)
9.00 ★ A House Through Time New series. David Olusoga charts more British history as lived through by the successive inhabitants of a house, this time a property in Edinburgh. **See Pick of the Day** (1/4)
10.00 Red Dwarf Rimmer wants to transfer to a holoship (1/6) (r)
10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Katie Razzall
11.05 Murder Trial Part one of two. In 2024, Brian Low is found dead in rural Scotland, and former gamekeeper David Campbell stands accused of his murder (r)
12.05 am The Devil in the Family: The Fall of Ruby Franke With the Franke family isolated, people on the outside try to find out what is happening (r)
12.55 Sign Zone: Ambulance (r) (SL)
1.55 Evolution Dolphins (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning Celebrity chat
1.30 pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal Newcastle Racecourse plays host, where two pistols catch Helen Gardiner's eye, and Henry Nicholls splashes out on a rare Christmas single (r)
3.00 Deal or No Deal Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the red boxes in the right order (r)
4.00 Tipping Point Ben Shephard hosts the quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning £10,000 (r)
5.00 The Chase With contestants from Northampton, Doncaster, Manchester and Luton (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

A visit to Coronation Street (8.30pm)

7.30 Tom Kerridge Cooks Italy Tom uncovers the culinary secrets of chestnuts and pasta (5/6)
8.00 Emmerdale Kev is thrilled, while Dylan admits to April that he has been struggling
8.30 Coronation Street Tim takes in Richie's daughter Lucy without consulting Sally
9.00 The Chase Around the World The teams land in Zurich to take on the Governess and the Dark Destroyer. Players must solve questions to navigate the city and find Bradley Walsh at the finish line (5/6)
10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; Regional News
10.45 FILM Quantum of Solace (12, 2008) James Bond sets out on a personal mission of vengeance and uncovers a plan to cause a coup in a Latin American country. Spy thriller sequel with Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, Judi Dench, Gemma Arterton and Mathieu Amalric
12.35 am Shop on TV
3.00 The Summit The Mountain's Keeper gives one participant a tough decision to make (r) (SL)
3.50 Unwind with ITV
5.05 Deal or No Deal: Celebrity Special Game show (r) (SL)

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland **7.30** Hidden Lives (r) **8.00** Beechgrove Garden **8.30** Scotland's Greatest Escape (r) **9.00** Martin Compston's Scottish Fling (r) **9.30** Martin Compston's Scottish Fling (r) **10.00** Scot Squad (r) **10.30** Edinburgh Unlocked. New series. The best of the Edinburgh Festival **11.00** Scotcast **11.30pm-Midnight** Growing Up Scottish (r)

BBC2 Wales 11.05-12.05am Eisteddfod 2026 with Huw Stephens. Highlights (r) **BBC1 N Ireland 10.40pm** The Crime I Can't Forget (r) **11.30-1.20am FILM Yesterday (2019)** Comedy starring Himesh Patel **BBC1 Scotland 7.00-7.30pm** River City (r)

The best of the week's films on TV

Pages 26-27

Himesh Patel stars in Yesterday
BBC1, 10.40pm

Channel 4

6.30 **am The King of Queens** (r)
7.45 **Everybody Loves Raymond** (r)
9.10 **Frasier** American sitcom (r)
11.10 **Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA** From New Jersey (r)
12.05 **pm Channel 4 News Summary**
12.10 **Find It, Fix It, Flog It** (r)
1.10 **The Great House Giveaway** (r)
2.10 **Countdown** With Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 **A Place in the Sun** Jasmine Harman helps a couple find a property in Murcia, Spain (r)
4.00 **Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith** Transforming Ashby Manor's parkland (r)
5.00 **Château DIY** One pair work on their luxury hotel-style bedroom and bathroom (r)
6.00 **American Pickers** Junk experts Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz encounter a never-before-seen farmer's mini-bike (r)

The Schoolgirl Terrorist? (10pm)

7.00 **Channel 4 News**

8.00 **Renovation Rescue** Vogue Williams and Luke Mabbott help a widow finally breathe new life into her beloved family home that holds so many precious memories

9.00 **Spy Next Door: The Anna Chapman Story** The FBI reveals that Anna Chapman is just one of a sprawling web of Russian agents on the loose in the United States (2/2)

10.00 **The Schoolgirl Terrorist?** Documentary examining the events that led to Rhianan Rudd becoming the youngest girl to be charged with terror offences in the UK in 2020 at just 15-years-old

11.05 **Social Media Monsters** A look at how a stalker sought revenge on her former boss, using LinkedIn, Instagram and X to ruin her reputation online, before moving on to other targets (2/10) (r)

12.10 **am Crime Scene Cleaners** (r) **1.05 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives** (r) **1.55 Hotel Hell** (r) **2.45 Dictator: Hitler Interviews** (r) **3.40 Fur Babies** (r) **4.35 House of Craft** (r) **4.55-5.50 Come Dine with Me** (r)

5

6.00 **am Milkshake!**
9.15 **Jeremy Vine**
11.30 **Storm & Alexis** Discussion
12.45 **pm 5 News at Lunchtime**
12.50 **Matt Allwright** Debate on the day's biggest stories
2.20 FILM **The Replacement Daughter (PG, TVM, 2024)** When Jessica's mother is struck by a hit-and-run, she falls into the care of a wealthy woman, but not everything is what it seems. Thriller starring Stacy Haiduk
4.00 **Castle** A personal injury attorney is murdered (r)
4.55 **Love Nature** A red kite feeding centre in mid-Wales (r)
5.00 **5 News with Dan Walker**
6.00 **Crete: Jewel of the Med** An exploration of the largest of the Greek Islands (r)
6.55 **5 News Update**

Benidorm is Murder (9pm)

7.00 **Around the World in First Class with Josie Gibson** Josie heads for the tourist hotspots of Finland and Sweden, and enjoys a helicopter trip

7.55 **5 News Update**

8.00 **The Yorkshire Vet Special: Peter's Dream** New series. Cameras follow Peter Wright as he creates a Yorkshire pet memorial garden, inspired by Sussex's pet chaplain and church. **See Pick of the Day**

9.00 **Benidorm Is Murder** Detectives Dennis and Rosa investigate when a cleaner finds a murder victim. Crime drama starring John Hannah and Carolina Bécquer (3/6)

10.00 **Killer at the Crime Scene** Investigating the death of spa owner Ildiko Krajnyak, who was killed in a explosion at her beauty spa in Orange County, California (r)

11.05 **The Body in the Thames** The story of an unknown boy whose dismembered body, discovered in the River Thames in 2001, launched an investigation that took officers around the world (r)

12.05 **am Street Cops** (r) **1.00 Cruise TV 2.00 Entertainment News 2.10 GPs: Behind Closed Doors** (r) **3.05 Castle** (r) **3.50 Friends** (r) **4.35 Cruising with Susan Calman** (r) (SL) **5.25-5.35 Entertainment News**

12.30am Scotcast. Discussion on Scotland's biggest news stories (r) **1.00** Alan Carr's Picture Slam. With contestants from Coventry, London and Glasgow (r) **1.45** Weather **1.50-6.00am** BBC News **STV 12.35-3.00am** Shop **3.50-5.05am** Unwind

S4C 6.00-6.59pm Cynefin (r) **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Pobol y Cwm. Hywel is concerned for Griffiths **8.25** Gwlad y Basg: Gwilym Bowen Rhys (r) **8.55** News **9.00** Fairbourne: Y Mor Wrth y Drws (r) **10.00** Taclo'r Ty (r) **10.30-11.35** Yr Afon (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 **pm Villages by the Sea** A lost harbour in Port Carlisle
7.30 **Wainwright Walks** England's highest peak, Scafell Pike. Last in the series
8.00 **Operation Mincemeat** How Britain deceived Hitler into thinking the Allies were planning to invade Greece in 1943
9.00 **The Coen Brothers Story** Documentary about film-makers the Coen brothers. **See Pick of the Day**
10.00 FILM **Inside Llewyn Davis (15, 2013)** An aspiring musician struggles to make a name for himself in the Greenwich village folk scene of early 1960s New York. Coen brothers drama starring Oscar Isaac
11.40-1.15am FILM **Shaft (15, 1971)** Detective thriller with Richard Roundtree

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.35 **pm Midsomer Murders** The author of a book that sparked a nationwide treasure hunt is found dead (S24, ep2)
3.35 **Classic Emmerdale**
4.40 **Classic Coronation Street** Double bill
5.50 **Heartbeat** A labourer dies of strychnine poisoning
6.55 **Heartbeat** A tractor thief strikes at farms around Aidensfield
8.00 **Vera** A fisherman's body is found tangled up in a trawler's net
10.00 **Grantchester** Alphy discovers a young woman he knows has vanished (S9, ep7)
11.00 **Grantchester** Geordie and Larry investigate the mysterious death of a reclusive man. (S9, ep8)
11.50-1.25am **Trial & Retribution** The murder weapon is discovered. Last in the series (S10, ep10)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60
8.00 Sort Your Life Out with Stacey Solomon
9.00 Better Date than Never New series. Dating show
10.30 RuPaul's Drag Race UK: Meet the Queens
10.55-12.50am FILM **Bridget Jones's Baby (15, 2016)**

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

12.00 Live DP World Tour Golf Danish Golf Championship
5.00-7.00pm Live PGA Tour Golf Action from the FedEx St Jude Championship
7.30 Live Betfred Super League: Leeds Rhinos v Leigh Leopards (Kick-off **8.00**)
10.15 Live PGA Tour Golf
11.00-4.00am Live Tennis

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

2.00 **pm The Alfred Hitchcock Hour** A letter leads to murder
3.00 **The Eighties**
4.00 **Discovering: Claude Rains** A profile
5.00 **Portrait Artist of the Year 2022**
6.00 **Tales of the Unexpected**
6.30 **Tales of the Unexpected**
7.00 **Voices of the Valleys** Pressure mounts on the Welsh male voice choirs as three major events draw nearer
8.00 **Discovering: Michelle Pfeiffer** The life and career of the actress
9.00 **Clint Eastwood: A Life in Film** The actor discusses his life and career
10.50-12.30am FILM **I Am Alfred Hitchcock (15, 2021)** Profile of the Master of Suspense, one of the most influential and studied filmmakers in the history of cinema

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

1.20 **pm Magnum, PI** A photographer hires Thomas
2.25 **The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes** A governess is accused of murder
3.30 **Boon** Ken pursues a missing witness
4.35 **The Professionals** Cowley's former love is endangered
5.45 **Minder** A criminal escapes from Chelmsford prison
6.50 **Sharpe** Sharpe marries Jane Gibbons — then rushes off to capture a fort behind French lines
9.00 **Benidorm** First-ever episode of the comedy series starring Johnny Vegas
9.35 **Benidorm** Martin and Kate get lost in the town centre
10.00 **Benidorm**
10.30 **Benidorm**
11.00-12.15am **Black Sails** Vane feels like Flint may be a threat

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

7.00pm The Floor
8.00 The 1% Club Quiz show hosted by Lee Mack
9.00 Romesh Ranganathan's Parents' Evening
10.00 Changing Ends The Carrs head to London
10.35 Family Guy
11.05 Family Guy
11.35-12.05am American Dad!

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00-10.30am Live Snooker Chinese Open Round two
12.30-4.00pm Live Snooker Chinese Open Round two
6.30-9.30 Live MLB: New York Yankees v Seattle Mariners (Start-time **6.35**)
11.30-3.45am Live CPL: Jamaica Kingsmen v Guyana Amazon Warriors

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 **pm Come Dine with Me** From Co Durham
3.20 **Four in a Bed**
3.50 **Four in a Bed**
4.20 **Four in a Bed**
4.50 **Four in a Bed**
5.20 **Four in a Bed**
5.50 **Car S.O.S.** Tim and Fuzz restore a 1990s Japanese super saloon in Devon
6.50 **Car S.O.S** Tim and Fuzz travel to South Yorkshire to pick up a Ferguson TE20 tractor
7.55 **Grand Designs** Building a home on a minuscule 38-square-metre plot in London
9.00 **The Reclaimers: Made in Suffolk** A trip to Great Yarmouth's iconic Joyland uncovers nostalgic salvage. Last in the series
10.00 **24 Hours in A&E** Doctors try to save a baby who stopped breathing at home
11.05-12.10am **24 Hours in A&E** Documentary

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

2.00 **pm Classic Neighbours**
2.30 **Classic Neighbours**
3.00 **Whitstable Pearl** Crime drama (S1, ep5)
4.10 **Lovejoy** (S6, ep5)
5.20 **As Time Goes By**
6.00 **Last of the Summer Wine** (S4, ep6)
6.40 **Last of the Summer Wine** (S4, ep8)
7.20 **Last of the Summer Wine** The trio take a nostalgic steam train ride (S5, ep1)
8.00 **The Marlow Murder Club** Judith, Becks and Suzie investigate when the Mayor dies in the middle of a meeting (S3, ep1)
9.00 **Hit Point** New series. Romantic thriller with Nick Blood and Saffron Hocking (1/6)
10.00 **New Tricks** The team reopens three cases of rape (S7, ep4)
11.20-12.35am **Luther** The detective's holiday is interrupted by news of a attack (S2, ep3)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm A Perfect Planet A look at how the oceans support marine life
8.00 Bangers & Cash
9.00 Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics
10.00 Bangers & Cash
11.00 Bangers & Cash
12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.40pm House of the Dragon Fantasy prequel (S1, ep5)
7.45 House of the Dragon Pentos has an offer (S1, ep6)
9.00 Possession Oliver becomes unexpectedly violent at Hope Hill (3/5)
10.00 Possession (4/5)
11.00-12.05am All Her Fault A betrayal is uncovered (5/8)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

1.40 **pm Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon (PG, 1942)** Mystery thriller with Basil Rathbone
3.10 **The True Story of Jesse James (PG, 1957)** Biopic starring Robert Wagner
5.00 **Tolkien (12, 2019)** JRR Tolkien biopic with Nicholas Hoult
7.10 **Moon (15, 2009)** An astronaut working alone at a base on the moon discovers the disturbing truth about the operation he is running. Sci-fi drama starring Sam Rockwell
9.00 **The Woman King (15, 2022)** An all-female group of warriors attempt to protect the West African kingdom of Dahomey. Historical drama starring Viola Davis
11.40-2.00am **Anna (15, 2019)** Action thriller starring Sasha Luss

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.30 **pm** FILM **Rebecca (PG, 1940)** Romantic thriller starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine
4.05 FILM **Jigsaw (PG, 1962)** Murder mystery starring Jack Warner
6.20 **Strange But True**
6.55 **The Brothers**
8.00 **Mark Saber** The detective tries to help a man who thinks his wife is a murderer
8.30 **The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club** The Crickets sing *Everyday* and *Think it Over*
9.20 FILM **The Sea Shall Not Have Them (U, 1955)** The survivors of a sea-plane accident share their life stories while awaiting rescue in a dinghy. Drama starring Dirk Bogarde
11.10-1.05am FILM **The Comic (PG, 1969)** Comedy drama with Dick Van Dyke

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

7.00pm Walrus: Life on Thin Ice Documentary
8.10 Peleliu: WWII's Most Well-Preserved Battlefield
9.15 Inside Japan's War American bombing pounds the Japanese home islands
10.20 Walrus: Life on Thin Ice
11.30-12.00 Weathered: Earth's Extremes

Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

6.55pm Burden of Proof: Who Killed Jennifer Pandos?
8.00 The Essex Murders: Who Killed Goldfinger?
9.00 The Essex Murders: Who Killed Goldfinger?
10.00 The Essex Murders: Who Killed Goldfinger?
11.00-1.00am FILM **Touching the Void (15, 2003)**

Friday 14

★ Picks of the day

Frank Skinner: 30 Years of Dirt
Sky One/Now, 9pm

Skinner shoots from the lip... he scores

"They're filming this in black and white," Frank Skinner says to his audience of grey-sprinkled fans at the Soho Theatre in Walthamstow, east London. "They said that's how people picture me. It comes out on VHS next week." Having emerged onto the stage arms aloft, accepting the delighted applause of his fans with the confident entitlement of a man who has sold out an extended nationwide tour including three West End runs, he sets out his store with a complaint as to the two empty seats in the front row. (He will, he explains with the air of a man who purposely left them empty, feel much better about the non-attendance if he drives past them being cut out of their car on his way home.) Helen Stewart

Beethoven's Seventh at the Proms
BBC4, 7pm

After his appearance at the World Cup final half-time show the Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel presents his second Prom of the season, directing the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a tantalising evening of energy and dance as he pairs Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with Gabriela Ortiz's *Revolucion diamantina*. It promises to be a spectacular night characterised by Dudamel's signature physicality and momentum. The Seventh is suited to his style, with its propulsive sense of movement towards a prancing, dancing finale. After the intermission, the UK premiere of Ortiz's work, inspired by the 2019

Gustavo Dudamel presents his second Prom of the season

Glitter Revolution protest in Mexico, which was staged against state violence against women and girls. Georgia Mann presents. **HS**

Ann Droid
BBC1, 10.40pm

The Basic Eldercare Robot Linda (Diane Morgan) encourages Sue (Sue Johnston) to dig out her tent, sing campfire songs and take a trip to watch a meteor shower. Morgan and Johnston are a charming double act, and despite the sci-fi presence of an android the writing is warm and tender — watch for a perfect wordless scene between Paul Ready's Michael and a drug-trial lawyer (Jake Bhardwaj). **Victoria Segal**

Carpe Diem
More4, 9pm

Foreign crime dramas that find an audience here tend towards the noirish, but this French-language show's casebook has a comic twist. Tom Villeneuve (Samuel Le Bihan) spent 17 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Now a lawyer, he's on a mission to exonerate the innocent. Tonight he turns his unconventional legal skills towards helping a deep-sea fisherman who has killed a gangster in apparent self-defence. **VS**

This week's best films on TV Pages 26-27

BBC1

6.00 am Breakfast The latest news
9.30 Animal Park (r)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back Thieves steal a luxury car (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 The opening session on day five from Alexander Stadium, where the heptathlon gets under way with the 100m hurdles and high jump
1.15 pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 The Hairdresser Mysteries Hallowe'en arrives in Blossom Vale along with a crime wave
2.45 Escape to the Country (r)
3.30 The Repair Shop (r)
4.30 The Answer Run Quiz show
5.15 Pointless Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

The One Show's Alex Jones (7pm)

7.00 The One Show at 20 Alex Jones and Roman Kemp present an extended edition bringing together some of the biggest names, favourite stories and standout moments from the past 20 years

8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day five from Alexander Stadium, including the men's 200m and women's 800m finals. Finals also take place in the men's high jump and 400m hurdles, and the women's discus. With commentary by Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News

10.40 Ann Droid Sue goes camping to see a meteor storm. **See Pick of the Day** (5/6)

11.10 FILM Mothers' Instinct (15, 2024) When a tragic accident shatters the harmonious lives of two housewives, guilt, suspicion and paranoia unravel their sisterly bond. Drama starring Anne Hathaway, Jessica Chastain, Josh Charles and Anders Danielsen Lie

12.40 am Weather for the Week Ahead The latest forecast
12.45 BBC News Headline round-up

BBC2

6.30 am The Answer Run (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Marcus Wareing Simply Provence (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News Headlines
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
1.30 The Finish Line Quiz show (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? The players "visit" Wrexham (r)
2.45 The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart Two editions (r)
4.35 Vintage Antiques Roadshow From Renishaw Hall (r)
5.15 Flog It! From Basingstoke (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games Quiz show (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning A couple cannot agree on what type of house to buy (r)

Presenter Monty Don (8pm)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day five from Alexander Stadium, including the women's 10,000m final. Coverage continues on BBC1

8.00 Gardeners' World Drought forces Monty Don to reconsider Longmeadow's planting, propagate resilient plants, prune a rambling rose and harvest vegetables

9.00 Bergerac A startling revelation about Cate's murder changes everything. Drama starring Damien Molony (5/6)

9.45 QI XL Sandi Toksvig hosts an extended edition, with Rose Matafeo, Ross Noble and Lou Sanders answering questions involving ticks, tax and toes (r)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis with Paddy O'Connell

11.05 FILM On Falling (15, 2024) A Portuguese worker in a Scottish warehouse comes to terms with loneliness and alienation as she seeks connection. Drama starring Joana Santos and Inês Vaz

12.45 -1.45am Sign Zone: The Rapture A psychologist meets a convicted murderer, who foretells apocalyptic disaster. Thriller starring Ruth Madeley and India Amarteifio. Last in the series. (r) (SL)

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning Celebrity chat
1.30 pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal David Dickinson and his dealers set up stall in Oldham, where Alison Chapman gets her hands on some puppets (r)
3.00 Deal or No Deal Another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the Banker for the chance to win a cash prize (r)
4.00 Tipping Point Ben Shephard hosts the quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning £10,000 (r)
5.00 The Chase Four contestants work as a team to take on one of the ruthless Chasers (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

Emma Thynn & Abbey Clancy (7.30pm)

7.30 Abbey Clancy: Celebrity Homes Abbey visits the homes of Olivia Bowen and Emma Thynn (2/6) (r)

8.00 Emmerdale Ruby is thwarted, while Lewis surprises Kev with an announcement

8.30 Coronation Street Idris tries to convince Alya to sell him her share of the business

9.00 Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Celebrity Special Jeremy Clarkson hosts the big-prize quiz in which Steph McGovern and Dion Dublin answer questions to win cash for their chosen charities (r)

10.00 The Twisted Tale of Amanda Knox After four years in prison for a crime they didn't commit, Amanda and Raffaele are free. Drama starring Grace Van Patten (7/8)

11.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; Regional News

11.50 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel (4/6) (r)

12.15 am Shop on TV
3.00 Force of Nature (r) (SL)
3.50 Long Lost Family Two people search for their long-lost brothers (r) (SL)
4.45 Unwind with ITV

Variations

BBC Scotland 7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven **7.30** Scotland's Greatest Escape (r) **8.00** Paramedics on Scene (r) **9.00** Hercules the Bear: A Love Story. A Scottish couple who raised a grizzly bear (r) **10.00** Still Game (r) **10.30** Two Doors Down (r) **11.00** Situationships with Sophie and Christine (r) **11.30pm-Midnight** Situationships with Sophie and Christine (r)

BBC1 N Ireland 10.40pm The Big Deal with Steph McGovern (r) **11.40** Ann Droid **12.10am FILM Mothers' Instinct (2024)** Drama starring Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain **1.40-6.00am** BBC News
ITV1 Wales 7.00-7.30pm Coast & Country

The best guide to streaming
Pages 22-24

Philippa Northeast in My Brilliant Career
Netflix

Channel 4

6.30 am The King of Queens (r)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r)
9.10 Frasier American sitcom (r)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA From New Jersey (r)
12.05 pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway (r)
2.10 Countdown With Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 A Place in the Sun Finding a property on Gran Canaria (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith In Dorset, bad weather threatens Mapperton House's annual plant fair (r)
5.00 Château DIY At Château de Saugé, a Scottish-themed suite renovation is complete (r)
6.00 American Pickers A stash from one of the US' oldest bicycle and sporting goods store is uncovered (r)

Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich (8pm)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich A woman has a £9,500 nano-fat treatment to rejuvenate her under-eye shadows and a man tackles hair loss head-on in an eight-hour transplant (5/6)

9.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown Jimmy Carr hosts the words-and-numbers quiz, with Jon Richardson and Roisin Conaty taking on new team captain Rob Beckett and Kiell Smith-Bynoe (r)

10.00 Big Fat Quiz: Best Bits There's quizzing disaster in every form imaginable, as our hilarious cast come unstuck in some of the finest moments from the *Big Fat Quiz*

11.05 Sarah Millican: Chatterbox Live Stand-up show recorded at London's Bloomsbury Theatre in 2011, in which the comedienne shares humorous insights into her life, including the perils of living alone (r)

12.10 am Bill Bailey Live: Part Troll From Hammersmith Apollo (r)
1.35 Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (SL)
2.25 Four in a Bed (r) **4.35 Couples Come Dine with Me** (r) (SL)
5.30 Kirstie's House of Craft (r)
5.40 A Place in the Sun (r)

5

6.00 am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis Discussion
12.45 pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright Debate
2.20 FILM My Husband's Seven Wives (PG, TVM, 2024) Maggie meets a woman who claims to also be married to her husband, and the two uncover a web of lies surrounding him. Thriller starring Kristi Murdock
4.00 Castle A mysterious recurring dream drives Castle and Beckett to seek answers (r)
4.55 Love Nature Winter on Islay (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Ibiza: Jewel of the Med A visit to the Balearic island known for its nightlife and rich cultural history (r)
6.55 5 News Update

Alexander Armstrong (8pm)

7.00 Tom Read Wilson's Magnificent Journey The presenter's travels take him to Italy. Last in the series (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Alexander Armstrong in Sri Lanka Alexander heads for the paradise isle of the Indian Ocean, exploring its golden sands and historic culture, beginning in the fortress town of Galle (1/3) (r)

9.00 The Big Drought of 1975 A record-breaking spell of erratic weather in the UK that lasted for 16 months from May 1975, culminating in 1976 when thousands of households had to rely on standpipes. Featuring archive footage and first-hand accounts from famous faces (r)

10.30 Piers Morgan: Uncensored Opinion-led news and debate hosted by Piers Morgan

12.05 am Fare Dodgers: At War with the Law (r) **1.00 Cruise TV** (r)
2.00 Entertainment News on 5
2.10 GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r)
3.00 Castle (r) **3.45 Friends** (r)
4.35-5.25 Cruising with Susan Calman Barcelona (r) (SL)

STV 7.00pm The STV Radio Football Takeover. Hosted by Ewen Cameron, Ronnie Charters and Callum Bell **7.30-8.00** What's on Scotland **12.15-3.00am** Shop on TV **4.45-6.00am** Unwind **UTV 7.00pm** UTV Life **7.30-8.00pm** Hidden Northern Ireland

S4C 6.00pm Gerddi Cymru (r) **6.30-6.59** Garddio a Mwy (r) **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Mike Bubbins: Un Mewn Miliwn. The comedian tries to learn Welsh in a year (r) **8.55** News **9.00** Am Dro! (r) **10.00** Y Deis (r) **10.30-11.35** Miwsig Fy Mywyd (r)

BBC4

FV 9/24, FS 108, SKY 116, VIRGIN 108

7.00 pm Beethoven's Seventh at the Proms Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Beethoven and Gabriela Ortiz. **See Pick of the Day**
8.35 TOTP: 2000 With Geri Halliwell, Five and Lene Marlin
9.05 TOTP: 2000 With Chicane feat Bryan Adams, Macy Gray, Blink 182 and ATB
9.35 TOTP: 1985 Music by UB40 with Chrissie Hynde and Madonna
10.05 TOTP: 1986 Featuring It Bites, Lionel Richie, Anita Dobson and Chris de Burgh
10.35 Elvis Costello In Concert: Later Presents A studio performance by the singer-songwriter
11.35-12.35am KD Lang: BBC Four Sessions Country singer kd lang performs at LSO St Luke's in London

ITV3

FV 10, FS 115, SKY 119, VIRGIN 117

1.35 pm Midsomer Murders Barnaby investigates the suspicious death of a woman (S1, ep1)
3.35 Classic Emmerdale
4.40 Classic Coronation Street Double bill
5.50 Heartbeat Lord Ashfordly presents his charming new wife to the villagers
6.55 Heartbeat Tragedy hits the village
8.00 Doc Martin Martin prepares to face his hearing (S8, ep8)
9.00 Doc Martin Martin's medical career remains under scrutiny (S9, ep1)
10.00 Grantchester A suspicious death interrupts the Easter fête (S10, ep1)
11.00 Grantchester A death plunges Geordie and Alphy into a world of academic adversaries (S10, ep2)
11.50-12.50am Trial & Retribution (S11, ep1)

BBC3

FV 23, FS 107, SKY 115, VIRGIN 107

7.05pm Deadly 60
7.30 FILM Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG, 2014) Fantasy comedy
9.00 Death in Paradise
10.00 Ghosts Australia
11.15 He Had It Coming New series. Comedy drama
11.40-12.05am He Had It Coming The girls face a threat

Sky Main Event

SKY 401, VIRGIN 501, EE 439

2.00pm Live The Hundred The women's Eliminator (Start-time **2.15**); The men's Eliminator (Start-time **6.00**)
7.15 Live EFL: Wolverhampton Wanderers v Blackburn Rovers (Kick-off **8.00**). Action from the match at Molineux
10.30-4.00am Live Tennis The Cincinnati Open

Sky Arts

FV 36, FS 143, SKY 122, VIRGIN 123

12.00 noon FILM Seven Dials Mystery (12, 1981) Agatha Christie whodunit starring John Gielgud
2.30 pm Tales of the Unexpected
3.00 The Eighties
4.00 Discovering: Janet Leigh A profile
5.00 Portrait Artist of the Year 2022
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
7.30 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
8.00 Guy Garvey: From the Vaults Archive TV music performances from 1980
9.00 The Thousand and One Musical Lives of Fleetwood Mac A profile of the band
10.15 Classic Albums Fleetwood Mac's 1977 album *Rumours*
11.35-12.45am Fleetwood Mac: Live in Boston A 2004 concert

ITV4

FV 26, FS 117, SKY 120, VIRGIN 118

12.10 pm Magnum, PI Robin sends Thomas to Los Angeles
2.10 Magnum, PI Thomas agrees to protect a murder witness
3.15 Boon There's chaos at Crawford Boon as their secretary leaves
4.15 The Professionals Doyle is given a new rifle for testing
5.25 British Touring Car Championship Highlights Action from Knockhill
6.55 Sharpe Munro orders Sharpe to kill a French colonel
9.00 FILM RoboCop 2 (18, 1990) The cyborg law enforcer battles a deranged drug lord, unaware the corporation that created him is planning to replace him. Sci-fi thriller starring Peter Weller
11.15-1.15am All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite Hard-hitting action

ITV2

FV 6, FS 113, SKY 118, VIRGIN 115

7.00pm The Floor The 57 remaining contestants fight for more squares
8.00 The 1% Club Quiz show hosted by Lee Mack
9.00 FILM John Wick: Chapter 2 (15, 2017) Action sequel starring Keanu Reeves
11.25 Family Guy
11.55-12.25am Family Guy

TNT Sports 1

NO SKY, VIRGIN 521, EE 430

7.00-10.30am Live Snooker Chinese Open Coverage from the quarter-finals
12.30-4.00pm Live Snooker Chinese Open Quarter-finals
7.30-10.00 Live European Athletics Championships The night session on the fifth day
12.15-3.00am Live MLB
4.00-7.00am Live AFL

More 4

FV 18, FS 124, SKY 136, VIRGIN 147

1.40 pm Come Dine with Me Parties in Leeds
3.20 Four in a Bed
3.50 Four in a Bed
4.20 Four in a Bed
4.50 Four in a Bed
5.20 Four in a Bed
5.50 Car S.O.S. Tim and Fuzz take on a 1924 Austin 7 Chummy that doesn't belong to its supposed owner
6.50 Car S.O.S. Fuzz Townshend and Tim Shaw restore the smallest car they have ever worked on
7.55 Grand Designs Building a family home in a village in the Peak District
9.00 Carpe Diem Tom represents a fisherman who admits to murder. **See Pick of the Day**
10.05 24 Hours in A&E A nine-year-old boy has a dangerously high heart rate
11.10-12.15am 24 Hours in A&E Spinal injuries

U&Drama

FV 20, FS 158, SKY 143, VIRGIN 116

2.00 pm Classic Neighbours
2.30 Classic Neighbours
3.00 Whitstable Pearl Crime drama (S1, ep6)
4.10 Lovejoy (S6, ep6)
5.20 As Time Goes By
6.00 Last of the Summer Wine (S5, ep2)
6.35 Last of the Summer Wine (S5, ep3)
7.20 Last of the Summer Wine Sid and Wally come under suspicion (S5, ep4)
8.00 Father Brown A killer begins using Kembleford's model village to plan their attacks (S10, ep1)
9.00 Father Brown Lady Felicia pays an impromptu visit (S10, ep2)
10.00 New Tricks The case of a murdered graffiti artist is reopened (S7, ep5)
11.20-12.40am Luther The detective confronts the reality of his actions (S2, ep4)

U&Yesterday

FV 27, FS 159, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129

7.00pm A Perfect Planet
8.00 Canal Boat Diaries Robbie helps rescue a runaway narrowboat on the Macclesfield Canal
9.00 Canal Boat Diaries
10.00 Bangers & Cash
11.00 Bangers & Cash
12.00-1.00am Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108, VIRGIN 111, EE 342

6.40pm House of the Dragon Matt Smith stars (S1, ep7)
7.45 House of the Dragon Fantasy prequel (S1, ep8)
9.00 Station Eleven Kirsten confronts the source of her deepest trauma (7/10)
10.00 Station Eleven (8/10)
11.00-12.15am House of the Dragon Fantasy (S3, ep7)

Film4

FV 14, FS 300, SKY 313, VIRGIN 428

11.00 am Cleopatra (PG, 1963) Historical epic with Elizabeth Taylor
3.45 pm Siege of the Saxons (U, 1963) Medieval adventure starring Ronald Lewis
5.30 The Battle at Apache Pass (PG, 1952) Western starring Jeff Chandler
7.15 Horizon Line (15, 2020) An estranged couple discover new altitudes of fear aboard a plane when the pilot suffers a heart attack. Thriller with Allison Williams
9.00 Fury (15, 2014) An American tank crew undertakes a final mission behind enemy lines in the last months of the Second World War. Drama starring Brad Pitt and Shia LaBeouf
11.40-1.45am The Invitation (15, 2022) Horror thriller with Nathalie Emmanuel

TPTV

FV 82, FS 306, SKY 324, VIRGIN 445

1.05 pm The Edgar Wallace Mystery Theatre A racketeer is deported to the UK
2.15 The Adventures of Robin Hood
2.45 FILM Brandy for the Parson (U, 1952) Comedy starring Kenneth More
4.30 The Cheaters
5.00 A Family at War Margaret befriends an eligible widower
6.00 Rumpole of the Bailey The barrister visits an old friend
7.00 Z Cars A criminal sets up his partner in crime to take the fall for a robbery alone
8.00 Public Eye Frank searches for a missing woman
9.10 Supernatural The second in a series of horror stories
10.20 Tales of Frankenstein
10.55-12.15am FILM The Devil Bat (PG, 1940) Horror starring Bela Lugosi

PBS America

FV 84, FS 155, SKY 173, VIRGIN 187

6.50pm The Real Truth
7.55 Battle of Okinawa in Colour Documentary
9.00 Fall of Japan in Colour
10.00 The Real Truth Examining stress
11.10 Weathered: Earth's Extremes Climate challenges
12.00-1.05am Battle of Okinawa in Colour

Sky Documentaries

SKY 114, VIRGIN 121, EE 352

6.00pm Queen of Speed
8.00 Savage Mountain The story of Kristin Harila's record-breaking climb of the world's 14 highest mountains
10.00 FILM The Alpinist (12, 2021) Documentary about climber Marc-André Leclerc
11.50-1.40am Williams & Mansell: Red 5

Radio

Your seven-day listening guide and critics' choice

Saturday 8 August

TIMES RADIO

6.00am Rosie Wright and Calum Macdonald **10.00** Ed Vaizey. With Kathleen Stock, James Ball, Jonas Patrick Marvin and Rosan Smits **1.00pm** Jane Mulkerrins. With Peter Meades, Joe Pearlman and Bear Grylls **4.00** Carole Walker with Times Radio Drive **7.00** Highlights from Times Radio **10.00** Darryl Morris **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2

6.00am Sounds of the 60s **8.00** Joel Dommett **10.00** Romesh Ranganathan **1.00pm** Ellie Taylor **3.00** Rylan on Saturday **6.00** Sounds of the 80s **8.00** Sounds of the 90s **10.00** Dance Sounds of the 90s (r) **11.00** Alternative Sounds of the 90s

RADIO 3

6.30am Breakfast
9.00 Saturday Morning
12.00 Earlier... with Jools Holland. With Ute Lemper
1.00pm Key Changes: Radio 3's Essential History of Classical Music. The French Revolution reaches its most violent phase
2.00 Record Review
4.00 Sound of Cinema
5.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. The Bournemouth SO, Adam Hickox and cellist Maximilian Hornung in Shostakovich and Rachmaninov
7.30 Live BBC Proms 2026. Thomas Adès conducts Berlioz
9.40 BBC Proms 2026. Charles Hazlewood and Paraorchestra
11.00 New Music Show
12.30am Through the Night

Key Changes
Radio 3, 1pm

The station's history of classical music turns to Revolution-era France, with Simon Schama, *above*, in the chair. He is joined by guests to discuss how composers had to adapt to fast-changing politics and music moving from stuffy salons to public festivals, with revolutionary songs filling the streets. Music became a tool for expressing collective identity and national belonging.

RADIO 4

5.30am News Summary
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Living on the Edge (r)
6.00 News and Papers
6.07 This Natural Life (r)
6.30 Farming Today This Week
7.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 What Happened to Counter-Culture? With Stewart Lee (r)
9.30 What's Up Docs? Exploring the benefits of hydration (r)
10.00 You're Dead to Me. Roman emperor Constantine the Great
10.30 The Kitchen Cabinet (6/6)
11.00 Radical (r)
11.30 From Our Own Correspondent. Stories
12.04pm Toast. EasyJet's failed move into cinemas
12.30 Current-ish (3/3) (r)
1.00 News
1.10 Any Questions? (r)
2.05 Any Answers? Phone-in responding to Any Questions?
2.45 The Archers (r)
3.00 Drama: August in Manchester. By Katie Hims
4.00 Weekend Woman's Hour
5.00 Saturday PM
5.30 Sliced Bread (r)
5.54 Shipping Forecast
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.15 Loose Ends. Stuart Maconie presents from Belfast as the city hosts Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann
7.00 Last Word: Doing Death Differently. Exploring new options for body disposal (r)
7.15 Changing the Odds. How Gibraltar became the data hub for online gambling (r)
8.00 Archive on 4: Writing Our Mothers. How female writers have tackled mother figures (r)
9.00 Ten Fights That Made the Green Movement. Omnibus of the first five episodes (r)
10.00 News
10.15 The Food Programme (r)
11.00 Olga Koch: OK Computer (r)
11.30 Brain of Britain (r)
12.00 Midnight News
12.15am Bookclub (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Sunday 9 August

TIMES RADIO

6.00am Rosie Wright and Calum Macdonald **10.00** Sunday Morning with Adam Boulton **1.00pm** Ryan Tubridy **4.00** Carole Walker with Times Radio Drive. With Eric Barrett and Mark Steel **7.00** Highlights from Times Radio **10.00** Darryl Morris **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2

6.00am Good Morning Sunday **9.00** Love Songs **11.00** Paddy McGuinness **1.00pm** Elaine Paige **3.00** Sounds of the 70s **5.00** Pick of the Pops **7.00** Tony Blackburn **8.00** Paul Gambaccini **10.00** Radio 2 Unwinds

RADIO 3

6.30am Breakfast
9.00 Sunday Morning
12.00 Private Passions (r)
1.30pm Music Map. Debussy's orchestral work *La Mer*
3.00 Jazz Record Requests.
4.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. Tenebrae performs Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles*
5.30 New Generation Artists. Julius Asal and the Astatine Trio
6.00 Choral Evensong. From St James's Piccadilly, London (r)
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. Featuring Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and music by Mozart, live from the Royal Albert Hall
9.00 BBC Proms 2026. A performance of Kurtág's intense and searching *Kafka Fragments*
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 Unclassified (r)
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Drama on 4
Radio 4, 3pm

Ben Lewis's slick two-part adaptation of *Libra*, Don DeLillo's reimagining of the events surrounding the assassination of John F Kennedy, blends fact and fiction around the life story of Lee Harvey Oswald, played by Tucker St Ivany. An unnamed analyst (Fisher Stevens, *above*) is given the huge task of unravelling the events around the killing, while former members of the CIA are busy plotting.

RADIO 4

5.30am News Summary
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Bells on Sunday
5.45 In Touch (r)
6.00 News Headlines
6.05 Heart and Soul (r)
6.35 On Your Farm
7.00 News and Papers
7.10 Sunday
7.54 Radio 4 Appeal
8.00 News and Papers
8.10 Sunday Worship
8.48 Witness History (r)
8.58 Tweet of the Day
9.00 Broadcasting House
10.00 Desert Island Discs
11.00 The Archers. Omnibus (r)
12.15pm Last Word: Doing Death Differently. Body disposal (r)
12.30 Just a Minute (r)
1.00 The World This Weekend
1.30 Burnham's Pledge. Tackling the issue of rough sleeping
2.00 Gardeners' Question Time. Listeners' queries (r)
2.45 Opening Lines. Don DeLillo's 1988 novel Libra (1/2)
3.00 Drama: Libra (1/2)
4.00 Take Four Books
4.30 Brain of Britain
5.00 Witness History (r)
5.10 Behind the Crime (r)
5.54 Shipping Forecast
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.15 Pick of the Week. Highlights
7.00 The Archers. There's controversy at the summer fete
7.15 James Hutton and the Restless Earth. Geological time
7.45 Just One Thing (r)
8.00 Feedback (r)
8.30 Last Word (r)
9.00 Toast (r)
9.26 Radio 4 Appeal (r)
9.30 From Our Own Correspondent (r)
10.00 Archive on 4: It Must Be Wonderful to Be Free (r)
11.00 Great Lives (r)
11.30 More Wow (5/5) (r)
11.45 Short Works (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.15am Crossing Continents (r)
12.45 Bells on Sunday (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Tuesday 11 August

TIMES RADIO

5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Salma El-Wardany and Stig Abell **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Calum Macdonald with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2

6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Jazz Show **10.00** The Good Groove

RADIO 3

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics. Georgia Mann plays a selection of music and features
1.00pm Classical Live. Including the National Youth Orchestra in Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult. Examining how the newly married Hélène de Montgeroult joined the "grand monde" of Paris (r)
5.00 In Tune. Music news
6.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. Coverage of the Henry Wood Promenade concerts
8.15 BBC Proms 2026. A performance of Morton Feldman's *Crippled Symmetry*
10.15 Live BBC Proms 2026
11.45 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night

In the Studio
World Service, 1.30pm

While many tourists visit Africa for its natural wonders, in Lagos, Nigeria, plans are being made for a huge theme park and studio complex capitalising on the success of the Nollywood film industry. The Nigerian journalist Samuel Okocha follows the early days of the development of Kebulania, *above*, meeting not only the business people behind the project but locals, who are hoping for new jobs.

RADIO 4

5.00am News Summary
5.04 Burnham's Pledge (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 Invisible Hands. David Dimbleby on the story of the CIA
9.30 Inside Health (6/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 Screenshot. Ideas about masculinity on screen (6/6) (r)
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir. By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (2/5)
12.04pm Call You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence. The work of philosopher Ibn Khaldun
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Clair, by Philip Palmer
3.00 Lady on Trial with Lucy Worsley. Sisters sent to Australia for receiving stolen ribbons
3.30 Heart and Soul (r)
4.00 Above and Below: The Battle to Save Britain's Prehistoric Art. The threat from climate change to the ancient creative past
4.30 What's Up Docs? Relaxation
5.00 PM. With Nick Eardley
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz. New series of the quiz
7.00 The Archers. Alistair finds himself in a difficult position
7.15 Front Row. Arts programme
8.00 After EncroChat. Whether or not the EncroChat operation reduced the supply of drugs
8.40 In Touch
9.00 Crossing Continents. Efforts to protect Victoria Falls
9.30 Scam Secrets (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield (7/10)
11.00 Wild Inside (r)
11.30 A Good Read (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir (2/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Wednesday 12 August

TIMES RADIO

5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Salma El-Wardany and Stig Abell. With Kezia Dugdale **10.00** Hugo Rifkind **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Calum Macdonald with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Albie Amankona **10.00** Cindy Yu **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2

6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Folk Show **10.00** The Good Groove

RADIO 3

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics. A selection of music and features
1.00pm Classical Live. With a performance of Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements
3.00 Choral Evensong. From Chichester Cathedral during the Southern Cathedrals Festival
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult. How Hélène de Montgeroult used her musical talents to save her own life (r)
5.00 In Tune. Music news
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Gabriela Ortiz's *Revolución diamantina*
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night

Archive on 4
Radio 4 Extra, 10am

In *The Greenham Effect* Rebecca Mordan looks back at the women's peace camp established in 1981 at the RAF base in Berkshire that was the home of US cruise missiles. Mordan was part of the camp as a child, and was on a team who collected an oral history of women who were part of it. She speaks to Ann Pettitt and Karmen Thomas, the originators of the idea that led to the protest.

RADIO 4

5.00am News Summary
5.04 BBC Inside Science (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 Sideways. Author Matthew Syed explores the ideas that shape individuals' lives (5/8)
9.30 Breakin' the Cycle. Colin and D shut down their drug empire
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 After EncroChat (r)
11.40 This Week in History
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir. By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (3/5)
12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence. The work of Michel de Montaigne
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: United Kingdoms (r)
3.00 James Hutton and the Restless Earth (r)
3.30 TBA
4.00 The Power of Guilt (r)
4.15 The Media Show
5.00 PM. With Nick Eardley
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Best Medicine. Horse therapy, breaking bad news and finding a diagnosis on Instagram
7.00 The Archers. Carol continues to cause problems
7.15 Front Row. Arts programme
8.00 AntiSocial (r)
8.45 Café Hope (r)
9.00 Invisible Hands (r)
9.30 Inside Health (6/6) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield (8/10)
11.00 Sunil Patel: An Idiot's Guide to Living Forever. Having failed to become immortal, Sunil ponders where to go (6/6)
11.15 Follow the Rabbit (3/5) (r)
11.30 A Good Read (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir (3/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Paul Sinha is back to present a fifth series of his Perfect Pub Quiz, starting in Boston, Lincolnshire

Pick of the Week

Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz
Tuesday, Radio 4, 6.30pm

The return of the Sinhaman's quiz

A fifth series of the enjoyable show in which Paul Sinha tours the country discussing what questions make up the ideal pub quiz. He begins in Boston, Lincolnshire, where as well as fiendish general knowledge posers there are local ones about the football club that has had three England captains, and the Lincolnshire town that used to be England's capital. Sinha's obvious pleasure in allowing his audience to show off their knowledge, while showcasing his quizzing skills, makes you feel all warm inside. **Clair Woodward**

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Monday 10 August

TIMES RADIO
5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Rosie Wright and Stig Abell. With Andrew Neil **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Carolyn Quinn with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2
6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Jo Whiley **7.30** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Blues Show **10.00** The Good Groove

RADIO 3
6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics. A selection of classical music
1.00pm Classical Live. Maximilian Hornung is the soloist in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult. Donald Macleod explores the life and work of Hélène de Montgeroult (r)
5.00 In Tune. Music news
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. London's Royal Academy of Music and New York's Juilliard School orchestras conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen in Stravinsky, Berg and Bartok
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night

Human Intelligence
Radio 4, 1.45pm

The novelist Naomi Alderman returns with a new series examining the minds of history's greatest thinkers, and discovers where their creativity came from and how they applied it to their work. She begins with Emily Brontë, *above*, whose *Wuthering Heights* has spawned dozens of remakes, and asks if Brontë's reclusive nature contributed to the intensity of her writing.

RADIO 4
5.00am News Summary
5.04 Last Word (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 Across the Red Line. The value of higher education (3/3)
9.30 How Did We Get Here?: No World Order. How cooperation between the USA and Russia broke down
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 Behind the Crime. The story of a woman from Texas who stole an air conditioner
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir. By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (1/5)
12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence. The first in a run of episodes about recluses focuses on Emily Brontë
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Alone. By Moray Hunter (r)
2.45 Opening Lines (r)
3.00 Great Lives. New series. Derek Jacobi and Tim Walker reflect on Laurence Olivier
3.30 You're Dead to Me (r)
4.00 Burnham's Pledge (r)
4.30 The Kitchen Cabinet (r)
5.00 PM. With Nick Eardley
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Just a Minute
7.00 The Archers. Heartbreak is in store for Lynda
7.15 Front Row. Arts programme
8.00 The Briefing Room (r)
8.30 BBC Inside Science (r)
9.00 Across the Red Line (r)
9.30 How Did We Get Here?: No World Order (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield (6/10)
11.00 Intimacy (3/4)
11.30 A Good Read (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir (1/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Thursday 13 August

TIMES RADIO
5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Salma El-Wardany and Stig Abell **10.00** Hugo Rifkind. With Bryan Johnson **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Sebastian Payne with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Albie Amankona **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2
6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Clara Amfo **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Country Show **10.00** The Good Groove

RADIO 3
6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics. A selection of classical music
1.00pm Classical Live. A Prom featuring the National Open Youth Orchestra and members of BBC NOW
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult. Donald Macleod explores the twist and turns of Hélène's private life (r)
5.00 In Tune. Music news
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. The BBC SO conductor James Gaffigan plays Wynton Marsalis and Barber, and, with soloist Yeol Eum Son, Gershwin's charismatic Piano Concerto
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Great Lives
Radio 4 Extra, 10am

Marking the 70th anniversary of the death of the German theatre creator and writer Bertolt Brecht, *above*, the playwright John Godber joins Matthew Parris in a lively 2010 edition of the series to nominate him as one of his greatest inspirations. The men share the desire to bring theatre to people outside the usual cultural bubble and to make life's normalities seem like art.

RADIO 4
5.00am News Summary
5.04 Sideways (5/8) (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics. Using the Oracle to answer life's questions
9.30 The Guitar Story. John Wilson on how the instrument has driven cultural change
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 The Three Ages of Child (r)
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir. By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (4/5)
12.04pm Scam Secrets
12.32 Sliced Bread
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence. The mind of China's greatest female poet — Li Qingzhao
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Security. Written by Kelly Jones
3.00 This Natural Life. Phoebe Smith shows Martha Kearney one of her favourite places (6/6)
3.27 Radio 4 Appeal (r)
3.30 Feedback. Listeners' views
4.00 The Briefing Room
4.30 BBC Inside Science
5.00 PM. With Katie Razzall
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Icklewick FM (3/6) (r)
7.00 The Archers. David is offered a choice and Freddie attempts to make his mark
7.15 Front Row. Arts programme
8.00 At Your Own Peril (r)
8.15 The Media Show (r)
9.00 Loose Ends (r)
9.45 The Cows Are Mad (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield (9/10)
11.00 Radical
11.30 A Good Read (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir (4/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Friday 14 August

TIMES RADIO
5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Rosie Wright and Calum Macdonald **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** Dom Joly **4.00** Carolyn Quinn with Times Radio Drive **7.00** Geoff Norcott **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

RADIO 2
6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Mark Goodier **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Michelle Visage **9.00** Sophie Ellis-Bextor **11.00** The Rock Show with Shaun Keaveny

RADIO 3
6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics. Georgia Mann plays a selection of classical music
1.00pm Classical Live. The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra perform Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult. Donald Macleod and Clare Hammond discuss Hélène de Montgeroult's musical imprint (r)
5.00 In Tune. Music news
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026. Edwin Outwater and the BBC CO bring another genre-bending symphonic adventure to the Proms. Interval: Gus Casely-Hayford shares his love of Marvin Gaye's music
10.00 Late Junction
11.30 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night

BBC Proms
Radio 3, 7pm

The BBC Concert Orchestra under the principal guest conductor Edwin Outwater, alongside guest vocalists, celebrate a Motown great in *Marvin Gaye: Prince of Soul*. There are new orchestral arrangements of songs from throughout Gaye's, *above*, career — from the classic pop days of *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing* and *I Heard It Through the Grapevine* to his later politically influenced work.

RADIO 4
5.00am News Summary
5.04 The Briefing Room (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today. Headlines
9.00 Desert Island Discs (r)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 The Food Programme. Dan Saladino meets this year's collection of musicians performing at WOMAD festival
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir. By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (5/5)
12.04pm Rare Earth. New series. How architects can clean up the climate impact of building
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence. The legacy of Nikola Tesla
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Central Intelligence. By Greg Haddrick (6/10)
2.45 Living on the Edge (r)
3.00 Gardeners' Question Time
3.45 Short Works. *Staying Alive* by Roisín O'Donnell
4.00 Last Word. Obituaries
4.30 Sideways (5/8) (r)
5.00 PM. With Katie Razzall
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 The People Have Spoken. New series. Satirical comedy
7.00 The Archers. A decision is reached at Brookfield
7.15 Add to Playlist. New series. With guests Soweto Kinch, NoLay and Keelan Carew
8.00 Any Questions?
8.55 This Week in History (r)
9.00 Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics (r)
9.30 Breakin' the Cycle (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield. (10/10)
11.00 Americast. Analysis
11.30 A Good Read (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15 — The Lost Memoir (5/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

MindGames

Samurai Sudoku No 1040 Hard

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								2				1				
								1	6	4						
						4				9						
	2		9	5				3		2						3
	7					5		6				7			6	1
			7	2	4				4					3		
3			4		7		6					4		1		6
8							1						3	8	5	4
7			1		3		4			7		2			4	
			3	4	2					5	3				7	
		1					2						9	1		
		8		1	9		3			2						8

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Our five-grid Sudoku will test your powers of logic and elimination — against the clock. Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length but the interlocking boxes give you more clues — and more complexity! Remember — don't try to solve each Sudoku grid in turn, the puzzle has to be tackled as a whole.

Stuck on Samurai, KenKen, Killer or Sudoku? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

Solution to last week's Samurai Sudoku No 1039

3	9	8	1	5	4	2	6	7		9	3	7	2	1	8	5	6	4
4	7	6	9	2	3	5	1	8		6	5	4	9	3	7	1	2	8
2	5	1	7	6	8	3	9	4		2	8	1	6	5	4	3	7	9
7	2	3	4	1	9	8	5	6			1	4	6	8	2	5	9	3	7
5	8	9	6	3	7	4	2	1			3	2	9	1	7	6	8	4	5
1	6	4	5	8	2	7	3	9			8	7	5	3	4	9	2	1	6
9	4	2	3	7	6	1	8	5	2	9	7	4	6	3	5	9	2	7	8	1
6	3	5	8	4	1	9	7	2	3	6	4	5	1	8	7	6	3	4	9	2
8	1	7	2	9	5	6	4	3	1	5	8	7	9	2	4	8	1	6	5	3
						7	6	8	9	4	2	3	5	1						
						5	1	4	8	7	3	6	2	9						
						2	3	9	5	1	6	8	7	4						
7	4	3	1	2	5	8	9	6	7	3	1	2	4	5	1	6	7	8	9	3
2	9	1	6	4	8	3	5	7	4	2	9	1	8	6	9	3	2	7	4	5
8	6	5	3	7	9	4	2	1	6	8	5	9	3	7	4	8	5	1	6	2
6	7	2	4	9	3	1	8	5				3	1	9	5	2	8	4	7	6
1	5	8	2	6	7	9	4	3				5	6	2	7	9	4	3	8	1
4	3	9	8	5	1	7	6	2				4	7	8	3	1	6	2	5	9
5	1	4	9	3	2	6	7	8				7	2	3	6	4	9	5	1	8
9	8	7	5	1	6	2	3	4				6	5	1	8	7	3	9	2	4
3	2	6	7	8	4	5	1	9				8	9	4	2	5	1	6	3	7

Word Watch

By David Parfitt

Peesweep
a. A feeble person
b. An easy victory
c. An early spring storm

Sea sleeve
a. A coastal inlet
b. A dense band of fog
c. A cuttlefish

Togated
a. Peaceful
b. Insulated
c. Confined to campus grounds

Pinkster
a. Whitsuntide
b. A private detective
c. A mischief maker

Solution on page 46

Polygon

By Roger Phillips

Using the given letters no more than once, make as many words as possible of four or more letters, always including the central letter. Capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives are disallowed.

How you rate: 17 words average; 23, good; 30, very good; 37, excellent.

Friday's solution on page 46. Today's solution in MindGames on Monday

Codeword No 5914

11	24	14	25	24	15	■	14	4	12	12	14	20
12	■	17	■	16	■	■	■	12	■	19	■	24
17	15	23	5	22	■	22	24	15	13	1	2	18
12	■	22	■	24	■	24	■	10	■	8	■	2
14	21	3	23	26	1	2	■	12	22	24	15	23
24	■	26	■	■	■	12	■	3	■	■	■	18
■	■	23	16	1	12	5	23	25	1	17	■	■
7	■	■	■	2	■	24	■	■	■	23	■	15
12 O	10	23	22	1	■	25	12	8 N	14	3	15	24
5	■	2	■	12	■	24	■	12	■	25	■	17
9	12	23	14	25	24	15	■	9	24	1	6	24
1	■	22	■	1	■	■	■	26	■	12	■	14
24	8	25	1	17	24	■	25	24	8	8	1	14

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

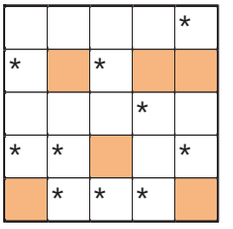
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 N	9	10	11	12 O	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid. Proper nouns are excluded.

Stuck on Codeword? To receive four clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

Square Routes® No 388 Easy

By Ian Simpson & Richard Heald

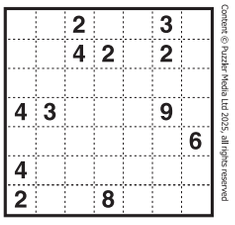


CARACAS
LEONARD
LIEN
LYNN
MORGAY
SERIAL
TIMER

Put one letter in each cell so that each word on the right can be spelt out by moving from cell to cell without using diagonal moves. You can use a cell more than once in a word (including backtracking into a cell you've just used), but double letters (eg, the LL in ALL) must use two adjacent cells. The words start in the coloured cells and the vowels are shown by asterisks.

Cell Blocks

No 5797



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

Solution to Square Routes, Codeword and Cell Blocks in MindGames on Monday. Yesterday's solutions on page 45

Sudoku No 17,012 Fiendish

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9

Solutions to Sudoku, Killer & KenKen in MindGames on Monday

					4			
	4		8				3	9
1				9	5			
	5	6					4	
9				1				8
	1					5	7	
			2	8				6
3	2				7		1	
			4					

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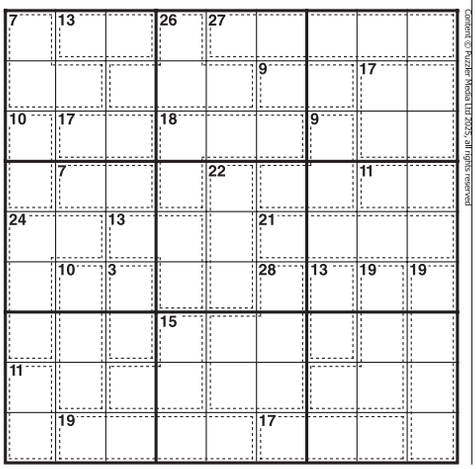
Killer No 10,867 Deadly

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



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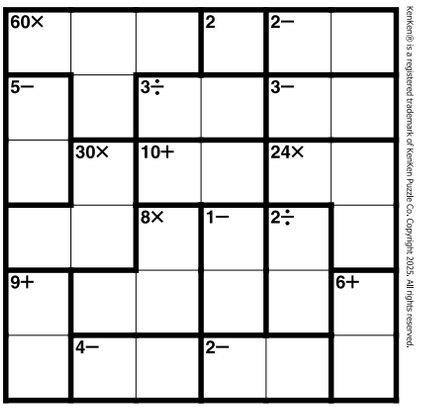
KenKen No 6906 Medium

All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.



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Cryptic Quintagram®

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Long time inside rifle range (3)

_ _ _

2 Shy? It's worth changing (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Admirer broadcast, at first, talks on movie *Ghost* (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Train judge beset by briefs? Yes, regularly (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Unbiased goal (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

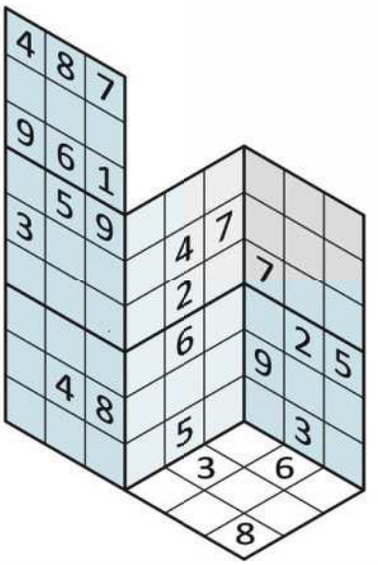
A	A	A	B	C	E	E	E
E	E	E	H	H	H	I	J
M	N	O	O	O	P	R	R
R	R	S	T	T	T	V	W

Solution on page 46

Tredoku No 1954 Hard

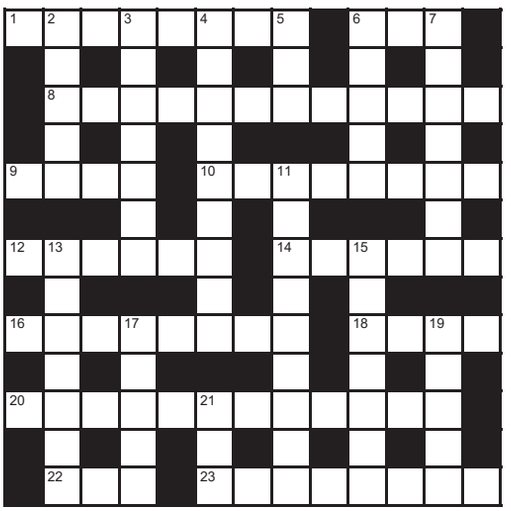
Tredoku is similar to Sudoku: the digits 1 to 9 must appear once only in each 3x3 box and in each line of nine consecutive cells. However, since the puzzle is three-dimensional, the lines may be straight or bent around angles. Follow each line's direction in search of clues.

Solution in MindGames on Monday



Tredoku © Eyal Amitzur 2025. TREDOKU® is the registered trademark of Eyal Amitzur.

times2 Crossword No 10,230



Across

1 Boxer's training aid (8)
6 Industrial container for holding liquids (3)
8 Hostile to established or cherished beliefs (12)
9 Greenish-blue colour (4)
10 Close examination (8)
12 Arbitrary (6)
14 Recall of the past (6)
16 Medieval Christian soldier in the Holy Land (8)
18 In addition (4)
20 Hurry up! (4,2,6)
22 The heavens (3)
23 Respected, admired (8)

Down

2 Togetherness (5)
3 Formally invested as a monarch (7)
4 Came into flower (9)
5 Semi-solid hair product (3)
6 Call on, go to see (5)
7 More slender (7)
11 17th-century Dutch old master (9)
13 Outstanding debt (7)
15 Pastry with a filling of steak or chicken, eg (4,3)
17 Shabby, sleazy (5)
19 Design (5)
21 Lower digit (3)

Solution to Crossword 10,229

	P	Y	R	A	M	I	D		U	T	A	H		
	R	E		U		I		L		S				
G	O	W	N		D	I	S	S	U	A	D	E		
	S		A				S		L		I			
G	A	L	L	O	P		I	S	A	A	C			
	I				O		D		T					
A	C	C	O	U	T	R	E	M	E	N	T	S		
			V		A		N				R			
		S	P	E	W	S		T	A	R	T	A	R	
		C		R		S				A		M		
B	O	O	S	T	I	N	G			C	O	M	E	
		F		A		U		U		E		E		
A	F	E	W		M	O	N	G	R	E	L			

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

Mindset By 700

1. Divide into threes. Keep up!
APHRODITE BURGLE FEVER GLUCOSE KEY KIPLING NOVEL PEPPERMINT PURLOIN RUDYARD STEAL SUGAR TENSION TO URN

2. The first Mindset power of 2 is:
2^89=618970019642690137449562112
The first Mindset square is 497^2=247009
What is the first Mindset cube?

3. Divide into two sets of 4. **Which word is in both sets?**
AIR, BOARD, GRID, GRIP, HEM, HOLE, PAD

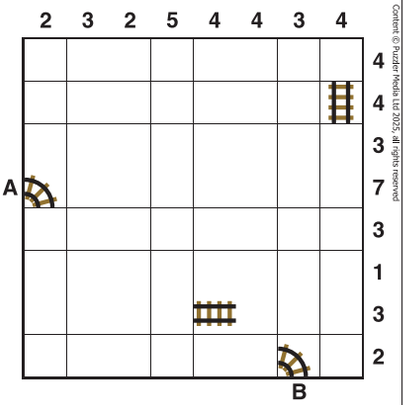
Solutions to Mindset and Scrabble on page 46

Put your solving skills to the test some more with The Times Mindset Puzzles Book 1

Train Tracks No 2939

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Solution in MindGames on Monday



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When and where was today's archive picture taken? Play Picle at thetimes.com/picle

Scrabble® By Paul Gallen

In this week's column, we return to the best-of-five final of the 2026 North American Scrabble Players Championship between Mack Meller and Orry Swift. The match was most noteworthy for its extraordinary conclusion in the fifth game, as reported last week. However, there were many excellent strategic decisions earlier in the contest, including the eventual champion's subtle choice in the opening game.

Facing the position shown in the board diagram below, Meller held a powerful rack of:

D F O S T _ _

He opted to play the bonus word FO*I*STED (A15d) for 90 points. At first glance, the play seemed to be a routine choice as it emptied the bag and gave Meller a 57-point lead in the endgame. However, it showcased deeper thinking as there were unhelpful letters lurking among the unseen tiles.

One of those tiles was the W. Prior to playing FO*I*STED, there was only one place to play the W: O10, forming DAW/EW. If Meller drew the W, there was a risk of his opponent blocking the area and Meller being stuck with an unplayable tile. This would allow Swift to finish the game in a piecemeal manner and steal the victory. Meller was aware of this threat and, by playing FO*I*STED, he created a second location on the board where he could later play a W: B14, forming WO.

Meller had other 90-point bonus words available. Two of them would have occurred to most experienced players immediately, yet neither offered the same insurance against the W draw.

Can you find the alternative bonus words that Meller rejected, declaring the blanks as follows?

D F O S T + *E R*
D F O S T + *F U*

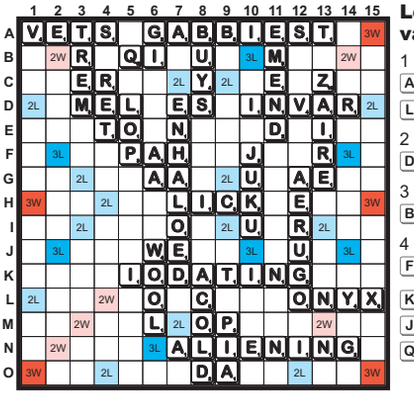
(*Hint: the second word is a military term formed from two everyday words.*)

There was another threat to Meller's chances of winning the endgame. Among the unseen tiles was the final R, which would have been unplayable after any of the above plays. As it happened, the feared R and W never arrived for him. Nevertheless, Meller's reasoning was impeccable. By taking account of the worst-case draw rather than simply the current score, he reduced his chances of losing the game.

Definitions
INVAR an alloy made from iron and nickel
DAW a jackdaw

Collins Official Scrabble Words is the word authority used.
Word positions use the grid reference plus (a)cross or (d)own.

2L double letter square (dl) 3L triple letter square (tl) 2W double word square (dw) 3W triple word square (tw)


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
A V E T S G A B B I E S T 3W
B 2W R Q I U 3L M 2W
C E R 2L Y 2L E Z
D 2L M E L E S I N V A R 2L
E T O N D I
F 3L P A H J R 3L
G 2L A A 2L U A E
H 3W 2L L I C K E 3W
I 2L O 2L U R 2L
J 3L W E 3L U 3L
K I O D A T I N G
L 2L 2W O C O N Y X
M 2W L 2L O P 2W
N 2W 3L A L I E N I N G
O 3W 2L D A 2L 3W

Letter values

1 point: A E I O U L N R S T
2 points: D G
3 points: B C M P
4 points: F H V W Y
K = 5
J X = 8
Q Z = 10

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Solutions

Killer 10,864

6	7	5	9	2	3	1	4	8
3	4	1	7	5	8	6	2	9
2	9	8	4	6	1	5	7	3
8	1	2	3	7	6	4	9	5
4	5	3	2	1	9	8	6	7
9	6	7	8	4	5	2	3	1
5	3	4	1	9	2	7	8	6
1	2	9	6	8	7	3	5	4
7	8	6	5	3	4	9	1	2

Killer 10,865

8	4	5	7	9	3	2	1	6
7	6	2	1	5	8	9	4	3
9	3	1	4	2	6	8	7	5
6	9	4	3	7	2	1	5	8
5	8	3	9	1	4	7	6	2
1	2	7	6	8	5	3	9	4
2	7	6	5	3	9	4	8	1
3	5	9	8	4	1	6	2	7
4	1	8	2	6	7	5	3	9

KenKen 6905

30× 2	12× 3	4	4− 1	5	10+ 6
5	3− 2	6	2− 4	1	3
3	6	8− 5	15+ 2	4	1
11+ 4	1	3	1− 5	6	3− 2
1	4	10× 2	6	3	5
6	5	1	9+ 3	2	4

The Listener 4929

T	A	N	C	L	A	S	S	A	I	C
H	D	E	L	A	Y	I	I	Y	T	D	A
E	Y	R	A	S	U	N	K	N	O	W	N
R	T	I	P	P	A	B	A	C	K	A	D
M	A	C	R	O	C	E	P	H	A	L	Y
A	I	K	I	D	O	N	O	R	L	E	S
L	U	M	M	E	ST	C	L	O	S	E	T
S	H	A	P	E	S	H	I	F	T	E	R
H	A	L	A	T	H	E	V	U	A	X	I
O	U	T	S	O	A	R	E	S	T	O	P
C	S	E	S	N	P	O	G	E	E	D	E
K	A	D	E	S	E	C	O	R	D	E	R

But Not in Chambers
by Augeas

Middle letters of extra words gave "Louis Sullivan", an American architect. Extra letters in wordplay spelt his maxim, "form follows function". Unclued entries were nonwords comprising a trigonometric function followed by a synonym of "form", with 18dn using both cos(ine) and cot(angent). More details at listenercrossword.com. The winners are Duncan Horne of Singapore; Steve Walker of Copley, West Yorkshire; Michael and Francesca Heaney of Kidlington, Oxfordshire.

Sudoku 17,007

1	3	4	8	7	6	9	2	5
6	9	7	5	2	3	4	1	8
8	5	2	4	1	9	6	7	3
5	8	3	9	4	1	2	6	7
4	6	1	7	5	2	8	3	9
7	2	9	3	6	8	5	4	1
3	4	6	1	9	5	7	8	2
2	1	5	6	8	7	3	9	4
9	7	8	2	3	4	1	5	6

Sudoku 17,008

3	5	6	4	8	9	2	1	7
7	2	4	3	6	1	9	8	5
9	1	8	7	5	2	6	3	4
4	3	9	5	2	7	1	6	8
6	7	1	8	4	3	5	9	2
5	8	2	1	9	6	4	7	3
2	6	5	9	7	8	3	4	1
8	9	3	2	1	4	7	5	6
1	4	7	6	3	5	8	2	9

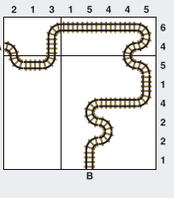
Sudoku 17,009

7	9	4	2	8	3	1	5	6
3	6	1	4	5	7	9	8	2
2	5	8	9	1	6	4	3	7
6	8	3	1	2	5	7	4	9
9	2	7	8	6	4	3	1	5
1	4	5	7	3	9	6	2	8
8	7	9	3	4	2	5	6	1
5	3	2	6	9	1	8	7	4
4	1	6	5	7	8	2	9	3

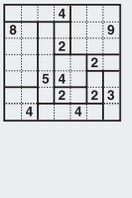
Codeword 5913

A B J E C T Z I R C O N
P E O N H A
O P T I M A L C H E E R
S T P O U R K
T H Y M E T H R I V E
L T H I
E N A M E L R E P L A N
B D Q O
C A R A F E U N B O X
M N G R A R I
E L D E R V I B R A T O
W O E L S U
S O N N E T V E R S U S

Train Tracks 2938



Cell Blocks 5796



MindGames

Chess By David Howell

The Sounds of Chess

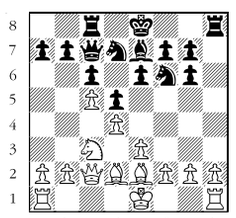
If you have been on the move this summer, whether on holiday, walking the dog or taking a long drive, a good podcast can be the perfect companion. Chess now boasts an impressive selection of podcasts, offering something for almost every kind of enthusiast.

For an insight into elite chess, C-Squared is difficult to beat. Fabiano Caruana and Cristian Chirila combine grandmaster knowledge with candid discussion of life on the professional circuit. Ben Johnson's long-running Perpetual Chess takes a broader approach, exploring lesser known stories through interviews with players, trainers, authors and adult improvers alike.

The Chess Angle speaks directly to the everyday club player, tackling tournament nerves, study habits and the familiar struggle to gain rating points. Meanwhile, the three American titled players behind Dojo Talks debate everything from chess fundamentals and artificial intelligence to the politics of the game.

I must confess that, until this summer, I had never really given podcasts a chance. Perhaps years spent sitting at the chessboard had made me too accustomed to silence. Now that I have started listening, it will be difficult to stop.

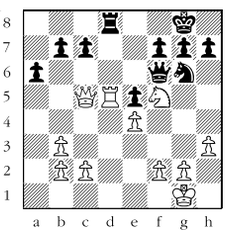
White: Fabiano Caruana
Black: Wesley So
Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz, St Louis 2026
Slav Defence
1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 d4 Nf6 4 e3 Bf5 5 Nc3 e6 6 Nh4 Bg6 7 Bd2 Be7 8 Nxg6 hxg6 9 Qb3 Qb6 10 Qc2 Nbd7 11 Be2 Rc8 A strategic mistake, as this allows White to seize space with gain of tempo. The energetic 11...dxc4! 12 Bxc4 c5 fully equalises, as ambitious play by White would now be punished: 13 d5 Ne5 14 Bb5+? Kf8! 15 f4 Nxd5. When the dust settles, Black emerges with an extra pawn and the safer king. **12 c5 Qc7**



This is an instructive example of a famous pawn structure. White has already obtained the desirable "connect four" from f2 to c5. This can be improved even further, however. **13 f4!** Caruana is one of the most active players at the top level, and he does not hesitate to create the "big clamp". This new structure, cutting out pawn breaks and limiting the scope of Black's army, is known to give White an advantage if achieved while so many pieces still remain on the board. **13...Nh7 14 h4 Nhf8 15 g3 g5** A desperate attempt at counterplay. Keeping the position locked with 15...f5 would allow White to slowly make improvements: 16 Kf2 Nf6 17 Kg2 followed by pushing the b-pawn and expanding on the queenside. **16 h5 b6 17 cxb6 Qxb6 18 Na4 Qb8 19 Ba6 Rc7 20 Qb3 gxf4 21 gxf4 Qxb3 22 axb3 Nb6 23 Nxb6 axb6 24 Bd3 f5 25 Ra8+ Kd7** In hindsight, 25...Kf7 may have been a better direction, to keep the g7-pawn guarded. **26 Kf2 Rc8 27 Ra7+ Rc7 28 Ra6 Rb7 29 b4 Nh7** 29...b5! would have minimised the queenside danger. **30 b5 c5 31 dxc5 bxc5 32 Rg1 Nf6 33 Rxg7 Rxh5 34 b6** 34 Bc3! was even stronger. **34...Rh2+ 35 Ke1 c4?** After defending well under pressure for so long, Black finally makes a decisive error. 35...Kd6! was necessary to hold the balance, but difficult to spot: 36 Ra7 Rxb6 37 Rgxe7 Rxb2. Black has sufficient compensation thanks to the active rooks. **36 Ra7 Rxa7 37 bxa7 Rh8 38 Bb4 cxd3 39 Rxe7+ Kc6 40 Rxe6+ Kb5 41 Rxf6 Kxb4 42 Ra6 Black resigns** After 42...Ra8 Black's rook is frozen, and White can simply wait until the black king is forced to give way: 43 Kd2 Kb5 44 Ra3 Kc4 45 Ra1 d4 46 exd4 Kxd4 47 Ra4+ Kd5 48 Kxd3 is one sample variation.

Winning Move

White to play. Aronian-Dominguez Perez, St Louis 2026. White has several tempting options. Which move immediately ends all resistance?



The first correct entry drawn on Thursday wins *The Times Winning Moves: 540 Chess Puzzles from Tournament Play* and *The Times Mindset Puzzles Book 1*. Two runners-up will receive a book prize. Answers on a postcard to: The Times Winning Move, PO Box 2164, Colchester, Essex CO2 8LJ, or email to: winningmove@thetimes.co.uk. Open to 18+, UK and ROI residents only. The answer will be published next Saturday.

Solution to last week's puzzle: 1 Qb4! wins by threatening 2 Qf8+. There is no good defence: **1...Nh7** (1...Qd6 2 Qb8) **2 Qb8.** Mate is coming.

The winner is Dr Boris Galperin of London NW3. The runners-up are John Moor of Wokingham, Berkshire, and William Kwoh of London NW7.

Bridge By Andrew Robson

This week, we look at two deals from the England v Belgium match of the Open series of the 57th European Bridge National Teams Championships in Riga. Both teams were vying for a top-eight spot and qualification for next year's Bermuda Bowl.

On the first, it is interesting that neither West overcalled 2♦ — experts like six cards for a Two-level overcall, and hate having three low cards in South's opened suit. I imagine most non-experts wouldn't think twice about overcalling 2♦ — and they'd be right this time!

Dealer South N-S Vul

	♠ J 10 6 5 4 ♥ 10 8 4 ♦ 9 ♣ K J 10 8	
♠ 9 8 7 ♥ K 6 2 ♦ A K J 10 2 ♣ Q 4	N W E S	♠ - ♥ A Q J 9 5 ♦ Q 7 6 5 4 ♣ 7 3 2
	♠ A K Q 3 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ 8 3 ♣ A 9 6 5	

Table One (England N-S)

S	W	N	E
1♠	Pass	4♠	end

The England declarer was disappointed to misguess the queen of clubs and went one down. He needn't have worried.

Table Two (England E-W)

S	W	N	E
1♠	Pass	4♠	4NT(1)
Pass	5♦	end	

(1) Two-suited take-out.

Great 4NT bid by Tom Paske. David Gold was always making 5♦ and, when North led a normal spade, he could make all 13 tricks, dropping his two clubs in dummy's hearts.

That was 11 imps to England. More (many more) came on our second board. At the other table, the English N-S had bid and made 6♠ ...

Dealer East Neither Vul

	♠ A Q 8 5 ♥ Q 3 ♦ A 9 ♣ A Q J 8 5	
♠ J ♥ 6 5 4 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ 9 7 4 3 2	N W E S	♠ 6 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ K Q 10 7 6 4 2 ♣ K
	♠ K 10 9 7 4 3 2 ♥ A 10 7 ♦ 3 ♣ 10 6	

S	W	N	E
			1♦
3♠	Pass	4♣(1)	Pass
4♦(2)	Pass	4♥(3)	Dbl(4)
Redbl(5)	Pass	4NT(6)	... Pass
...	Pass	6♦(7)	Pass
Pass!	Pass		

(1) Agreed spades, apparently.
(2) Control bid.
(3) "Last Train" buck-pass.
(4) For the lead.
(5) First-round control.
(6) Roman Key Card Blackwood (then some replies which seemed odd and are unnecessary to list).
(7) Inviting the grand slam.

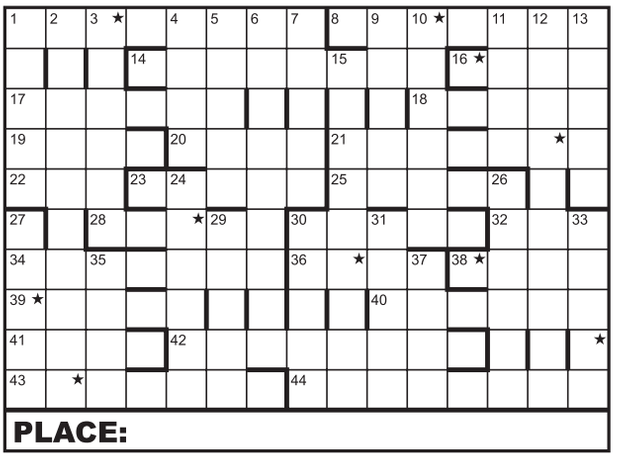
The Belgium South took ages over 6♦, wondering whether to bid 7♠. Eventually, he decided not to ... but forgot to bid 6♠. Oops — 6♦ went seven down. He could console himself that perhaps 6♠ wouldn't have made anyway, with East having secured a heart lead. England won the match 16-4.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

The Listener Crossword No 4932 Points of View by Porlock

Senders of the first three correct entries drawn will receive *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* or may choose from a selection of other books (see below). Send your entry with contact details completed to: Listener Crossword 4932, 5 Ibbetson Rise, Leeds, LS27 7UJ, to arrive by August 20.

Listener 4929 solution on page 45

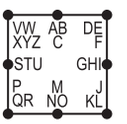


Prize options and more at listenercrossword.com
More information about Chambers books can be found at chambers.co.uk

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode..... **Email/phone**.....



After filling the grid, change a letter to show a literary figure and enter below the grid a place (two words) where he is memorialised, formed of the letters in starred cells. In grouped clues, the wordplay omits one letter of the answer; place a dot on the edge of that letter's cell according to the key shown (dots may overlap). Join each group's dots in the given order to show a point of view of the figure. In non-group clues, the wordplay leads to the answer with an extra letter (not entered in the grid). These letters spell where to find part of a second point of view of the figure and a description of a feature in view. Highlight the feature's name (a 6-cell block elsewhere in the grid). *The Chambers Dictionary* (2016) is the primary reference.

Group 1
1dn Worm's end not generating fine earth (5)
17ac Desperately loyal, elliptically (6)
2dn Explode vessel with half-empty hull — using these? (10, *two words*)
3dn Aberdonian gapes: they're very big (6)
4dn Trimmed top-quality fruits (4)
23ac Earl late in county took a low position (5)
30dn Events wanted sheepdog up regularly (5)

Group 2
14ac Local river charges to the ocean (8)
1ac Organise eg a lab's symbolic systems (8)
6dn Extreme unpleasantness starts to affect feelings unless altered slightly (9)
15dn Naval fleet trails huge walrus for Ed (9)
10dn Review site following camera settings (6)
16ac Year stalking on island north of Skye (4)
11dn A hostile author and martyrologist (4)

Group 3
20ac For Wall Street, a lot is lost in profits (4)
7dn Retro headgear for fighting season (5)
9dn Contrary pilgrim denied Japanese state (5)
18ac Inspirations for sermons: Paul, for instance, turning to accept Christ (5)
8ac Not sluggish, fellow enters place twice (7)

Group 4
27dn Extremely fast online access cut time (5)
22ac Raiser of awareness in US and in Haiti (3)
35dn Right-wing Conservative skips ball (4)
34ac New bestie somewhere with links? (7)

Group 5
28ac Troy abandons Den, another man (5)
30ac King keeps houses austere (5)

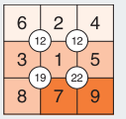
Group 6
13dn Indians swallow this caste axing head (5)
12dn Given tampering, stress Royal Navy needs uniform on those unpacking (10)
38ac Smashed sea shell (4)
33dn Tuck back stiff hairs (5)

Across
19 Foreign bingo knowledge casino cleared (4)
21 Exhibitors beginning to spot gross errors (7)
25 Nobbled Euro-MP, one in low spirits (5)
32 Inner nature, a tortuous thing? (3)
36 Dolly washes these things initially not available in shops (4)
39 One who charges less well? (5)
40 Fruit stone of use in New Testament (6)
41 Gutted four classical light movements (4)
42 One missing stewed beans by river (8)
43 Ordeal after sinks brought back flies (7)
44 Developed déclassée burr, maybe (8)

Down
5 Historic banter echoing in unlikely ears (5)
24 There's less resistance in existentialist after raising money for Nigeria (6)
26 Helps to teach material revised in master's absence (6)
29 Curved pipe Maori settlement connected to gathering of sewers? (5)
31 Neglecting a person without income, cut deeper into annual income (5)
37 Ending of trade in US beer applied for (4)

Today's Solutions

Sakuro 4815



Cryptic Quintagram
1 Era
2 Throw
3 Phantom
4 Rehearse
5 Objective

Friday's Polygon
airy, arty, aryl, bialy, binary, brainy, bray, briny, hairy, hiya, hyalin, inlay, **labyrinth**, lairy, laity, linty, liny, litany, nary, rainy, riyal, tiny, tray, trilby, yarn.

Scrabble
F*R*OST*E*D (A15d), D*U*ST*O*F*F* (B15d) (ST*I*FADO (D15d) was also available to Meller).

Word Watch
Peesweep (c) An early spring storm (*Collins*)
Sea sleeve (c) A cuttlefish (*Chambers*)
Togated (a) Peaceful (*OED*)
Pinkster (a) Whitsuntide (*OED*)

Mindset
1. {APHRODITE, FEVER, TENSION} — KYLIE albums; {BURGLE, PURLOIN, STEAL} — synonyms for ROB; {GLUCOSE, PEPPERMINT, SUGAR} — ingredients of KENDAL(L) mint cake; {KEY, TO, URN} — anagram of KOURTNEY; {RUDYARD, KIPLING, NOVEL} – KIM. All are Kardashians.
2. 30^3=27000. The first cube to contain the string "700".
3. {AIR, GRID, HEM} can precede LOCK; {BOARD, GRIP, HOLE} — can follow KEY; PAD can do both.

One question — four hints
How many will you need?
Try Quizle here or at
thetimes.com/quizle

Jumbo crossword No 1803

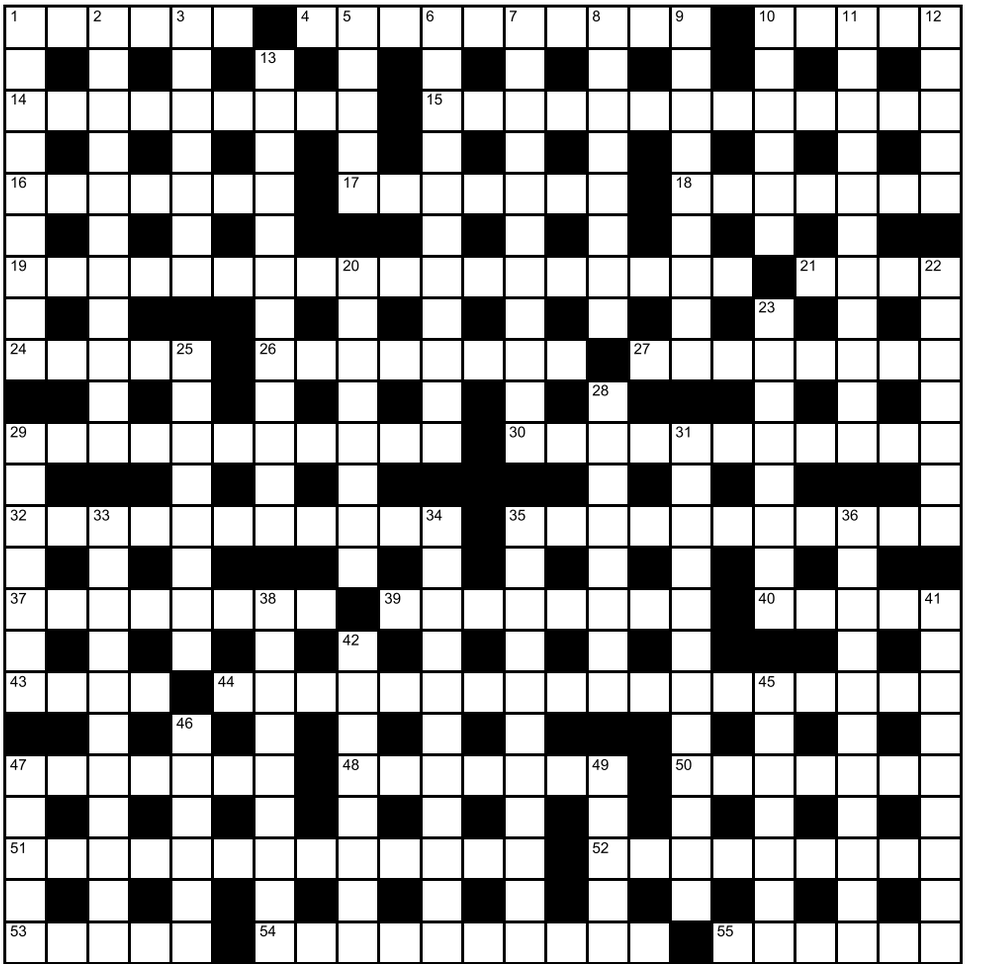
Cryptic clues

Across

1 Heavenly pair of legs exposed after pulling back short skirt (6)
4 Fungus still hides a stone design (5,5)
10 Infant, last to sulk, overturned dish (5)
14 Not being taken into account, blokes start to trash flat (9)
15 Ranks quality soldiers in places to go? (3,10)
16 Doctor on a trip after work's decline (4,3)
17 Uncovered rudimentary boats, nearly all nearest the stern (7)
18 Mournful stage of journey, one in unlimited silence (7)
19 I'm optimistic sleeping partners should move on shop's contents (4,7,7)
21 Dishonourable sort beginning to interrupt judge (4)
24 Young pigeon quietly enters pillar (5)
26 Understood Springfield's concerned with remnants of deal? (8)
27 Pass on development, saving outskirts in spa town (8)
29 Acting to root out former right-winger about what's behind covert Irish past, half-forgotten (11)
30 Hi-tech tools damaged natural breaker? (6,5)
32 Seaweed extract, free of iodine, bearing English granny (11)
35 Eccentric hurls corgis for those who might offer kicks (6,5)
37 My beloved that is absorbing every moment to begin with (6,2)
39 Preserve withdrawn 50 per cent of olives with roughly glazed earthenware (8)
40 At last outwit smart walrus? (5)
43 Heroin — kilo kept in sink (4)
44 This offence reduced by heads of Glaswegian Boys' Homes (8,6,4)
47 Because of which, question crowds before bishop (7)
48 Plant loaf intermittently on stove that doesn't close (7)
50 12 keeping horse in shape (7)
51 Bird brought back flatfish, eating flounder's tail in small quantities at a time (5,3,5)
52 Moved North Yorkshire market town wine stores (9)
53 Scottish town's half-hearted worry in review (5)
54 Spreading excessively, apparently many deliveries due (10)
55 Remnants of plot twisting, gentleman reflected (6)

Down

1 Household troops informed main source of protection? (9)
2 Corrupt pimp and waiter nearly do bird (6,5)
3 In tours, deviating from N (7)
5 Spear carrier no longer part of mounted paintings? (5)
6 Endlessly cheated clients finally sink aged earl (11)
7 Brief spell standing is controlling tense twitch of membranous inflammation (11)
8 Those who take on publicity edited poster (8)
9 Abstemious relief over many years, note (9)
10 Binding regularly stops vital organ (6)
11 Long veiled garment thus covering half of face when going around in African republic (7,4)
12 Elementary programming language (5)
13 Supportive system reduced healthy food, say (7,5)
20 Recently discovered large dog misses country (3-5)
22 Lives to embrace church, your one-time Christian emblem (7)
23 Work very hard, as shown by unaccompanied male you found in bar (4,1,3)
25 Dropping announcement, radar on a destroyer raised unusual thing (4,4)
28 Past leader of Ireland, old success in House (8)
29 Key party cutting American currency overseas (7)
31 Specialist in instruction — journalist, one that's positively charged in Hebridean islands (12)
33 Renewal of interest earning weak spoils (11)
34 Italians in part tide over poor Latin society (11)
35 Angry copper was once lying about tool (8,3)
36 Possibly square career soldier accepts time in prison (11)
38 Procure post-match train for my fans after leaving loudly (5,4)
41 Classical trio of eg French, Italian and Spanish guys on cycling team (9)
42 Extremely vile arachnid almost catching a family of wasps etc (8)
45 Get zany wild flower from Asia (7)
46 Belittle class in dictation? (6)
47 Bribe wife, literally tense with anticipation? (5)
49 Finishing touch from Rada for new part on stage (5)



NAME:

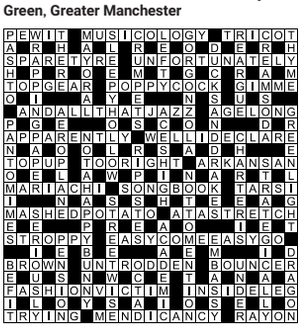
ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:

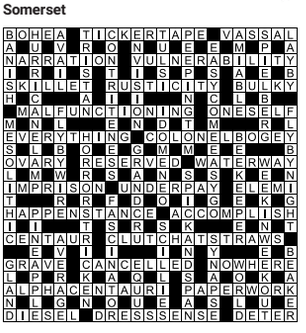
Prizes

The prize for each of the first correct solutions to the Cryptic and times2 Jumbo clues to be opened will be a collection of Times reference books — including The Times Reference Atlas of the World, Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, and Bradford's Crossword Solver's Dictionary published by HarperCollins. Entries should be marked "Cryptic" or "times2" and sent to: The Times Jumbo Crossword 1803, PO Box 2164, Colchester, Essex CO2 8LJ; or emailed to: jumbo@thetimes.co.uk, with "Cryptic 1803" or "times2 1803" in the subject line, to arrive by August 20. Open to 18+, UK & ROI residents only. The winners and the solutions will be published on August 22.

Solution to Cryptic Jumbo 1801
The winner is Peter Hamilton of Hindley Green, Greater Manchester



Solution to times2 Jumbo 1801
The winner is David Heath of Witham Friary, Somerset



The Times Crossword, Latin Crossword, Saturday Quiz and Sakuro are in the back of the main paper

times2 clues

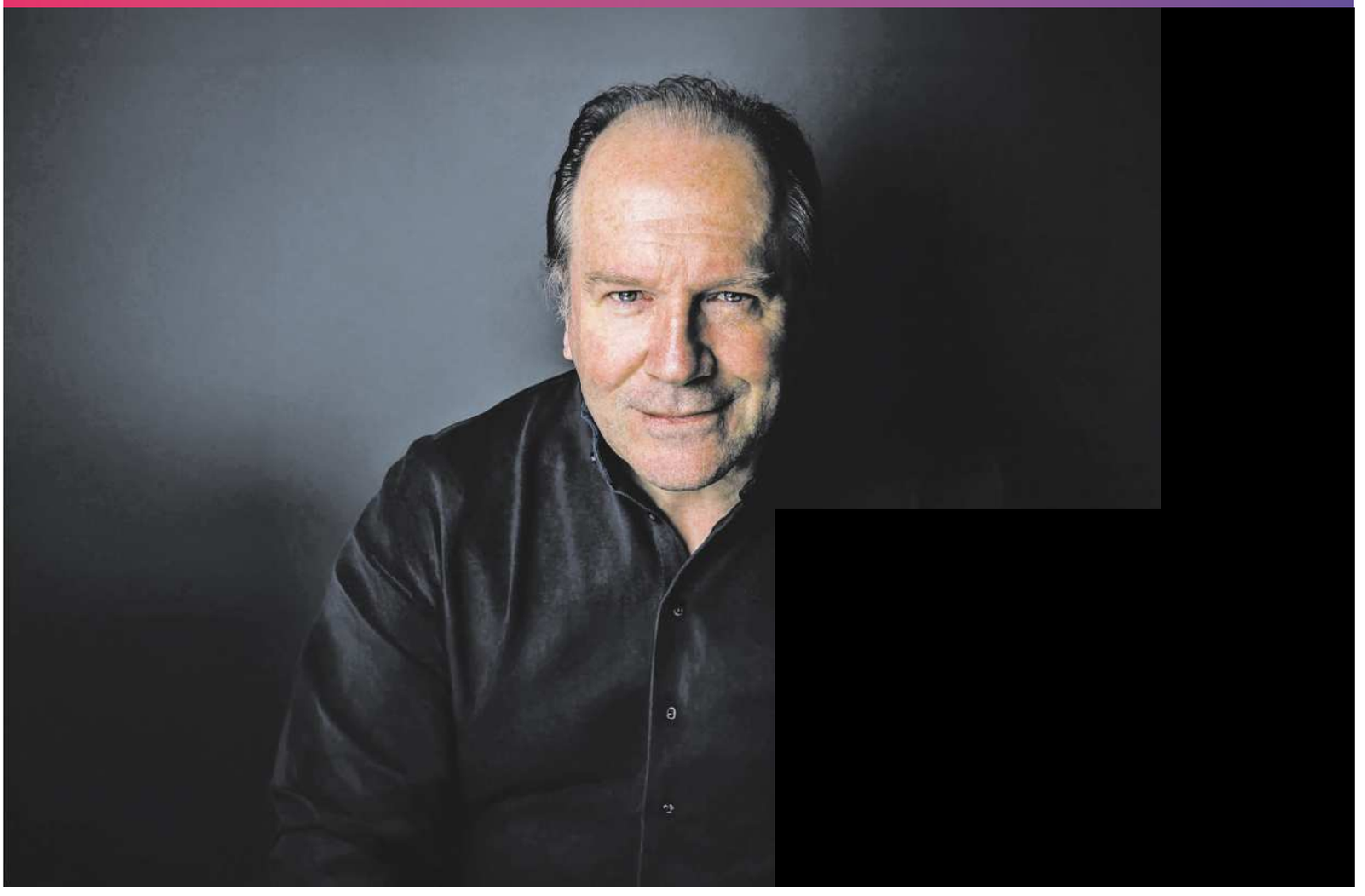
Across

1 Small bomb; hoist with one's own — (6)
4 (Of a country) neutral (3-7)
10 Herb (5)
14 Reserve, quietness (9)
15 How uranium decays (13)
16 Edible shellfish (7)
17 Enduring hardship uncomplainingly (7)
18 Relating to heat (7)
19 Situation where each fights alone (5,3,3,7)
21 Small forest (4)
24 Doughnut shape (5)
26 Coming halfway up the legs (4-4)
27 Incised or engraved design (8)
29 Provider of articles for a publication (11)
30 Having all sides the same length (11)
32 Not bothered (11)
35 A good beginning (6,5)
37 Flow controller; choke (8)
39 Relating to extortionate moneylending (8)
40 First Greek letter (5)
43 Very short hairstyle; harvest (4)
44 TV sitcom with Edina and Patsy (10,8)
47 Innovator; first settler (7)
48 Impede, hinder (7)
50 Demean; reduce to a lower rank (7)
51 First step to sainthood (13)
52 Provisional; hesitant (9)
53 Shown openly (5)
54 Process of dying out (10)
55 Seamus —, Irish poet (6)

Down

1 Not temporary (9)
2 Solid with four triangular flat faces (11)
3 Clergyman's house (7)
5 Groups of six balls (5)
6 Permitted route for planes (3,8)
7 Relating to an area of southeast Asia (11)
8 Abnormal growth of tissue, tumour (8)
9 Event featuring ten different sports (9)
10 Water heater (6)
11 Heavy vehicle (11)
12 Showing true allegiance (5)
13 Not particularly interesting (12)
20 Lasting a very short time (8)
22 Small amount of liquid (7)
23 Improvisatory composition; Disney film (8)
25 Good attribute (8)
28 Meddling or prying person (8)
29 Burning, corroding (7)
31 In existence for a great time (4-8)
33 Back up, confirm (11)
34 Argument, debate (11)
35 Plant with bright blue flowers (6-2-3)
36 Praise (11)
38 Morally dissolute person (9)
41 In a plain and simple style (9)
42 Person's picture (8)
45 Raise to a higher standard (7)
46 Put up a fight (6)
47 — Picasso, artist (5)
49 Game like bingo (5)

TIMES Events



Meet the Writer: An evening with William Boyd

Prepare to enter a shadow-drenched world where every step could be fatal. Join us for an evening with acclaimed author **William Boyd** as he discusses his latest book, *Cold Sunset*, with **Robbie Millen**, literary editor of The Times and Sunday Times. Author of modern classics such as *A Good Man in Africa* and *Any Human Heart*, Boyd will also reflect on his remarkable 50-year career as a novelist.

Wednesday, September 9 | 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Bryanston Square, London, W1H 1PQ

Book your tickets at **thetimes.com/events**

THE TIMES
SATURDAY AUGUST 8 2026

Sport

SONA MALETEROVA/GETTY IMAGES

Keely, medals and me

Georgia Hunter Bell interview, pages 10-11

Toney charged with assault after incident at nightclub

Charlotte Duncker

The England striker Ivan Toney has been charged with assault after an incident at a London nightclub in December.

The 30-year-old, who was part of Thomas Tuchel's World Cup squad this summer, will appear at Westminster magistrates' court next month to answer a charge of actual bodily harm.

The incident allegedly took place at a nightclub in Soho, central London. A spokesman for Toney said: "Ivan acknowledges the charge and although he is naturally shocked, he looks forward to being given the opportunity to clear his name in court."

Toney is contracted to Al-Ahli, having left Brentford to join the Saudi Pro League club two years ago in a deal worth £40 million.

After starting his career at Northampton Town, Toney had spells at Newcastle United and Peterborough United before making his name at Brentford. He scored 72 goals in 141 appearances, and when Toney departed, Thomas Frank, then the Brentford head coach, called him a "club legend".

His performances earned him a place in Gareth Southgate's England squad for Euro 2024 despite having made only 16 Premier League starts the previous season because of an eight-month ban for breaking FA betting rules. Last season he scored 42 goals for Al-Ahli and was a surprise addition to Tuchel's World Cup squad.

OWEN SLOT RETURNS

Keeping a close eye on my heart rate following quadruple bypass surgery revealed how much I care about sport, says our chief sports writer

PAGE 2-3

Norway tells Infantino to go but Argentina backs him

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

Football's civil war has intensified, with Norway demanding the resignation of Gianni Infantino and claiming he has lost the "institutional trust" needed to govern.

The stance came as the associations of Mexico and Argentina backed the embattled Fifa president, adding to the support Infantino has received from the Confederation of African Football.

The splintering of the different factions comes a week after Infantino abandoned his proposal to raise billions of pounds by selling off a stake in the commercial rights of the World Cup and other tournaments. His position has come under increasing scrutiny amid the fallout from the furore, and the Norwegian Football Federation president, Lise Klaveness, said Infantino no longer retained the full confidence of the football community.

"He does not have the institutional trust required to govern Fifa stably in the times we are in. There is no going back for Gianni Infantino," Klaveness, a qualified lawyer, said. "The international football co-operation is very much in trouble, and we must have a reason to get together now, and we want to ask the Fifa president to resign now."

Uefa's 55 members are continuing to stand firm in their threat to boycott all events organised by Fifa, football's

Continued on page 6

Sport moves you like nothing else – as I found out after my heart attack

Keeping a close eye on my heart rate after quadruple bypass surgery revealed how much I cared about summer's sporting drama, writes **Owen Slot**

The closest my wife ever came to killing me was late in the afternoon on Sunday, May 10, when Leandro Trossard scored.

There we are in the Cardiac Care Unit at St George's Hospital, Tooting. I'm only a few days post-heart attack, wires and tubes everywhere, and I have already expressed gently that if we are going to watch the West Ham United v Arsenal game then it would be preferable to do so in a calm way. The problem, here, is that my wife does not have it within her to watch Arsenal in a calm way, especially not at *that* point of *that* season.

What is instantly striking is the close correlation between game situation and beats per minute of my flimsy heart. The monitor beside my bed makes that abundantly clear. By this stage I'd already had a temporary pacemaker installed and had been ticking along at the prescribed 60 beats per minute (bpm).

Only five minutes into the game, though, with Arsenal dominating but not scoring, we're straight bang into the old narrative about whether they're going to bottle it again — and suddenly my heart is racing ahead of pacemaker pace. It hasn't gone this fast for days.

To clarify, I'm not an Arsenal fan. My wife is. Plus she works for them. She's put love and soul and untold man hours into them. So they're kind of my second club. At least that's what my heart is telling me. As game tension rises, so does my bpm. By half-time, the score's still 0-0 and I'm in the high sixties.

It's not until the 83rd minute that Trossard finally does his thing. Right foot, slight deflection, squirts in bottom right, Mrs Slot leaps from her chair, punching the air with one hand, her other hand over her mouth in some kind of concession to the concept of staying calm. Immediately I'm at 87bpm.

Worse, though, is yet to come: the West Ham equaliser, the four-minute VAR review, Mrs Slot now self-combusting and the stress is contagious. By the end of the four minutes I'm up to 96bpm, which has apparently been red-flagged on the main desk.

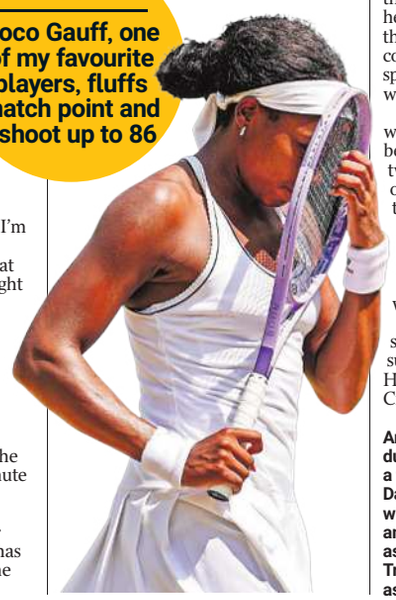
In walks Jane, an Aussie nurse, really excellent, dry of humour. "What's going on in here?" she asks. She then sees the iPad. "Ah." She ponders. "Maybe I should stay until the end of the game."

We ask if watching it hadn't been such a smart idea. "Well," she replies, "at least you're in the right place if it wasn't."

On reflection, it's probably unnecessary to stipulate that nurse Jane was excellent, because they all are. You finally resurface from quadruple heart bypass surgery and some things haven't changed: Arne Slot's given a press conference saying he's still going to be at Liverpool next season, Jannik Sinner's still unbeaten in Rome, and there is still this tireless team of angels around you nursing you back to life.

If anyone's missed me in these pages these past few weeks, that's what I've been doing: having my faith renewed in national institutions. First the NHS, then the National Theatre. My friend gave me a subscription to National Theatre at Home, which means you can watch the theatre rather than Arsenal on your iPad.

> "Coco Gauff, one of my favourite players, fluffs match point and I shoot up to 86"



That's a better route to recovery, and more on that later.

I also had the summer of sport to distract me and became obsessed with the relationship between game situation and my heart rate. Is it beating faster, for instance, when England are winning or when Thomas Tuchel turns England into a flat back six and Argentina are about to go 2-1 up?

There have been some scientific studies on this. The University of Montreal found that the heart rate of Montreal Canadiens ice hockey fans could go up by 75 per cent for TV viewers and 110 per cent if they were watching live.

A study of hospitals in the greater Munich area during the 2006 World Cup in Germany found that, on days when the German team played, the number of cardiac emergencies more than doubled and that this increased the deeper they went in the knockout stage. Thus the old cliché that sport can be bad for you.

Interestingly, for the third-place play-off in 2006 (Germany beat Portugal 3-1), cardiac incidents around Munich didn't go up at all. That's scientific proof that we don't care for bronze-medal matches. Bavarians don't anyway.

I'm interested more precisely in what it is I really care about, or what my heart tells me I care about. My cardiologist tells me of one day in hospital when he saw four patients in the cardiac ward who wheeled their monitors together so they could sit and play poker. The smarter among them kept an eye on their opponents' heart rates; a sudden spike indicated that something was up. What they couldn't ascertain was whether the spike meant they had a good hand or were bluffing on a bad one.

I suspect that the higher spikes were for the bluffers. I say that because having consumed the past two months' sport with half an eye on my smartwatch, I know I'm less triggered by victory than I am by the fear of my team/my player losing. The emotions of fear, anxiety and perceived danger are greater, my watch tells me, than the joy of winning.

This isn't quite uniform. My second-highest bpm during the summer of sport was triggered by Harry Kane's headed goal against Croatia (87 bpm); that was a happy

> "Germany losing was 84bpm; that's hilarity presenting as a form of joy"

Anti-clockwise from left: Gauff during her Wimbledon semi-final loss; a fan after Germany's World Cup exit; Dan Burn blocks a shot in England's win over Mexico; David Raya is fouled and West Ham's equaliser ruled out … as Arsenal claimed victory through Trossard's goal; and Cumberbatch as Frankenstein's monster

JOHN WALTON/PA; ALASTAIR MUIR/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; SHI TANG/GETTY IMAGES

> I watch *Frankenstein*, yet my heart rate only just hits the low seventies

> My highest bpm of the summer is for Arsenal and England v Mexico

emotion. One of my other highest was watching Germany lose a penalty shoot-out to Paraguay (84 bpm); that's hilarity presenting as a form of joy.

Wimbledon confirmed the way my mended heart works: barely a blip for when the good guys won; when I really cared was when I was anxious: Coco Gauff, one of my favourite players, fluffs match point in her semi-final and I shoot up to 86. McCartney Kessler is a player I'd never previously heard of and it's only the second round but when she stages a courageous comeback against the No1 seed, Aryna Sabalenka, there's a real David v Goliath thing going on, I'm a sudden Kessler convert, there's stress and danger in every point and I'm up to 84.

Likewise England v Argentina in the Nations Championship rugby. For most of it, England are ahead with something to spare and I'm not far off resting heart rate (65); in the dying minutes they're down to 13 men and capitulating and suddenly I'm on 85.

My highest bpm of the summer is almost a replica situation: England v Mexico in the last 16 of the World Cup, England are a man down in the Azteca and hanging on to a 3-2 lead with Tuchel's flat back nine. It's desperate stuff; I look at my watch and I'm on 91.

Then, three Mondays ago, it was suddenly all over: no more football, no golf, no rugby, no tennis, no Ben Stokes any more; all finished. Suddenly sport had stopped. I took myself off to the local cinema to see how that would compare.

First up *Toy Story 5* and then, in the slot for old classics, *Goodfellas*. Astonishingly, it seems, my heart barely noticed. That's not entirely a surprise for *Toy Story 5* (not a patch on *Toy Story 3*, one of the greats), though I do get a slight jolt when Jessie and Buzz Lightyear get married. The real surprise is *Goodfellas*; I know it's coming — the brutal scene when Joe Pesci and Robert De Niro kick Frank Vincent to the point of death — but when it does, my smartwatch barely flickers. It's like I don't care.

This brings me back to National Theatre at Home. I watch the highly acclaimed *Frankenstein* with Benedict Cumberbatch as Frankenstein's monster and it is menacing, disturbing, brilliant, yet when the monster rapes and murders Frankenstein's bride, my heart rate only just creeps into the low seventies.

Why so numb?

Certainly, here, seeing theatre on a screen and not live has to be a factor. But maybe this is just my heart explaining to me what it is that sport does to you. It gives a supporter a straightforward decision on who they want to win, allowing our smartwatches to understand quickly who is good and who is bad. Good drama, in theatre or on screen, is rarely so one-dimensional.

Or maybe those fine people in St George's wired me up wrong. I can't believe that's the case, though. I'm now able to walk miles. After nine weeks, I got the green light from the doc to mow the lawn. I mean, nowhere in the Bible is there anything about Lazarus being fit enough to fire up the lawnmower.

Of course, given the climate, I am unable to give the lawn any stripes. This I find frustrating and somewhat stressful, an emotional response which my smartwatch can also confirm.

Iraola can improve his players but he needs a few more

Liverpool owner's transfer stance could be exposed if new boss fails to elevate largely unchanged squad, writes **Paul Joyce**

At first glance, Liverpool appear to have reverted to a tried and trusted formula. On the previous occasions they have headed into the new season besieged by questions over a lack of signings, everything turned out just fine.

The back-up goalkeeper Adrián and the 16-year-old Harvey Elliott were recruited in the summer of 2019, while Federico Chiesa was a lone arrival in 2024. Fast-forward ten months, and the only two Premier League titles to have found their way to Anfield followed.

Each time there was merit in advocating continuity, especially with Jürgen Klopp's squad, which, fresh from Champions League success, was in the midst of hitting its sweet spot. Good luck trying to improve an exceptional, once-in-a-generation group that had been carefully pieced together without a hiccup.

Less obvious was persisting with the pool of talent Arne Slot inherited two years ago, even if Liverpool had finished third, having still been title contenders at the start of April 2024.

Even though some deals subsequently failed, such as a push for Martín Zubimendi in Slot's first transfer window, there was no switch to an alternative target. Faith was again rewarded.

Minor tweaks do not feel like a sensible option now, however. Liverpool limped into the Champions League, finishing fifth after losing almost a third of their games, were unable to perform the basics adeptly, and the sense of separation between the supporters and the team was such that Slot lost his job.

One of Andoni Iraola's first acts as the club's new head coach has been to bring forward the time his players are due to report to the AXA Training Centre to nearer 9.45am; though, invariably, they start drifting in earlier.

Little wonder he is so eager to start. The breadth of work the Basque must undertake feels vast.

On the one hand, Liverpool's owner, Fenway Sports Group (FSG), and the club's sporting director, Richard Hughes, know this. A deal was struck for the Osasuna winger Victor Muñoz in June to join the centre back Jérémy Jacquet, signed from Rennes in January with a view to arriving in July, and since then there has been an aborted pursuit of Yan Diomandé.

Liverpool offered €100million (about £86million) — €80million guaranteed, plus €20million in add-ons — when RB Leipzig's asking price was nearer €130million. In any case, Diomandé preferred Paris Saint-Germain initially and then Real Madrid, whom he has now joined for €125million, plus €15million in add-ons.

The search for wide players has since alighted on Paris. The pursuit of Bradley Barcola — whom the club view as a left wing/centre-forward option rather than a right-sided one — is being complicated by PSG holding firm on their valuation. They have quoted €150million-€170million for the France winger — a fee that is too high for Liverpool — and seem stubborn at present. Transfer games? Possibly, but PSG are not Newcastle United, who languish further down football's food chain, and therefore less likely to fold willingly.

There is also interest in Barcola's team-mate Ibrahim Mbaye, 18, which seems a more straightforward deal to pull off, although he is only one of many other wingers being considered.

In May, Liverpool also reached out to Anthony Gordon, but were too late and found themselves beaten to the punch by Barcelona. The Catalan club's £69million deal raised eyebrows at the time but looks less like an act of largesse now, given the way prices have shot up since.

It should be stressed that FSG also believes the present crop boast untapped potential, steadfast in its opinion that some of the best talent in the world was recruited last summer in Alexander Isak, Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike and Milos Kerkez.

The prevailing view has always been that there should be a natural uplift from last term, something Slot would advocate, having seldom had Isak, Wirtz and Ekitike on the pitch together.

Spending since May 2025 potentially stands at £550million (about £225million has been recouped), but even if Barcola had become a Liverpool player for about another £100million by now, taking the outlay to £650million, there would still be concerns about the depth of the squad, especially in defence.

That feels remarkable and brings scrutiny on how that money has been apportioned.

That the roll call has taken a little longer this week will have been a relief for Iraola. He has met Virgil van Dijk, Alisson, Cody Gakpo and Muñoz face to face for the first time, and now has a chance to begin

Iraola passes on instructions to Elliott, part of a largely unchanged squad he has inherited although Muñoz, left, is a fresh face at Anfield

How present squad compares to title winners

2026-27	2024-25	2019-20
Goalkeepers Alisson, G Mamardashvili	**Goalkeepers** Alisson, C Kelleher	**Goalkeepers** Alisson, Adrian
Right backs C Bradley, J Frimpong	**Right backs** T Alexander-Arnold, C Bradley	**Right backs** T Alexander-Arnold
Centre backs J Gomez, G Leoni, J Jacquet, V van Dijk	**Centre backs** J Gomez, I Konaté, J Quansah, V van Dijk	**Centre backs** J Gomez, J Matip, D Lovren, V van Dijk
Left backs M Kerkez, K Tsimikas	**Left backs** A Robertson, K Tsimikas	**Left backs** A Robertson
Midfielders R Gravenberch, T Nyoni, D Szoboszlai, A Mac Allister, C Jones, W Endo	**Midfielders** R Gravenberch, D Szoboszlai, A Mac Allister, C Jones, W Endo	**Midfielders** G Wijnaldum, J Henderson, Fabinho, J Milner, A Oxlade-Chamberlain, A Lallana, N Keita
Right flank F Chiesa	**Right flank** M Salah, F Chiesa, H Elliott	**Right flank** M Salah
No10 F Wirtz, H Elliott		
Left flank R Ngumoha, C Gakpo, V Muñoz	**Left flank** C Gakpo, L Díaz	**Left flank** S Mané, X Shaqiri
Striker A Isak, H Ekitike	**Striker** D Jota, D Núñez	**Striker** R Firmino, D Origi

BILL BARRETT/ISI PHOTOS /GETTY IMAGES

embedding his vision for the intense, vertical football that he had previously discussed on the phone with them.

Only Alexis Mac Allister remains absent and the Argentina World Cup finalist should return after tomorrow's friendly with Monaco at Anfield to bring the Liverpool squad up to its full complement.

That is important, not least because there are 31 days between now and the start of the league phase of the Champions League on September 8.

After that, Iraola, who is making his debut as a coach in Europe's elite competition, will find that time on the training pitch suddenly becomes rationed, with recovery eating into preparation for the next assignment.

In an interview with the *Anfield Wrap* during Liverpool's tour to the United States, he spoke about putting in place a base level that his players must not drop below.

"We have to have a system that gives us a floor," he said. "So even if we don't play incredibly well, we are not having our best day as football players, there is a system behind us that will give us a high floor. Let's raise our floor and when we are playing amazingly, it looks incredible. After that, you have to trust your players and, in this case, it is easy because I have very good players."

An injury restricted Isak to just 14 Liverpool appearances last season

Last season Liverpool's "floor" crashed. If FSG's hunch about the capabilities of the squad is right, and Iraola can make sense of the situation, then the short-lived era of Hughes (who seems bound for Al-Hilal when the window closes) and Michael Edwards, now a former chief executive of football for FSG, could yet have a lasting legacy.

That will not be easy, given arguably only Dominik Szoboszlai played to his true level last season, although expecting Van Dijk's performances to remain unaffected by age (he is now 35) is unrealistic. Pivoting to a reliance on Isak and Wirtz was always the plan post-Mohamed Salah and now that must come to fruition, with the Egyptian having quit at the end of last term to join Trabzonspor.

Beyond that, coaxing improvement from everyone else is paramount, particularly Ryan Gravenberch, Kerkez, Mac Allister and Cody Gakpo, who is wanted by Tottenham Hotspur but remains important to Liverpool while no new wingers arrive.

On the flip side, if Iraola does not manage to manoeuvre Liverpool into a position where they can be competing for major honours, then FSG's stance (and Edwards's departing insistence that the club is in a strong position) will have been left horribly exposed.

Liverpool have 24 players in their squad, but Ekitike, Conor Bradley and Giovanni Leoni are coming back at different points from long-term injuries. So too Jacquet, who dislocated his shoulder shortly after his signing was officially announced and required surgery. He has not yet featured and, worryingly, remains a doubt for the Monaco runout.

Joe Gomez will miss the start of the season with his latest muscle issue and so, of the four centre backs at Iraola's disposal, only Van Dijk can be counted upon at present.

In addition, Wataru Endo has played once since February, which was for Japan in the build-up to the World Cup. Muñoz has not played any competitive football since mid-May.

Then there is the uncertainty over the futures of Curtis Jones and Elliott, notwithstanding 19-year-old Trey Nyoni will be handed more minutes after impressing in pre-season so far to cement his status as a first-team player. Chiesa has made nine starts in two seasons and only two in the Premier League.

Of course, Liverpool have been here before with regard to injuries complicating team selection and have not tended to respond to what they perceive as short-term problems by venturing into the transfer market to appease a clamour for new faces. When they have, it has not worked out, as the names Arthur Melo, Ozan Kabak and Ben Davies testify.

They have invested plenty into what they believe to be two of the best young centre backs in Europe in Leoni and Jacquet, although neither has played in the Premier League or Champions League yet.

And at a level below that by signing two who shone at the Under-17 World Cup in Mor Talla Ndiaye and Ifeanyi Ndukwe. The latter will need a loan move for the forthcoming season as he does not meet the criteria for a work permit.

There are no guarantees, but Liverpool believe in their potential and the next step is providing opportunities to develop.

Against that is that Jacquet was signed when Liverpool were still under the impression that Ibrahima Konaté would be at the club, only for the Frenchman to leave on a free transfer after contract talks collapsed.

The severity of Bradley's injury has been known since January, Gomez has been beset by fitness problems for several seasons and the issues at right back last term were such a headache that a convincing remedy was needed as a priority.

It is likely Liverpool will hope to find a solution to the issue of cover at centre back and right back with one player, but amid the myriad of names being floated one has still to stick.

Iraola was recruited as someone who can improve players. That is all well and good, but a few more to work with will greatly help his cause.

SPORT NOTEBOOK

Martyn Ziegler
Chief Sports Reporter

Infantino praised officials for sell-off plan most never saw

No wonder there is such fury among many members of Fifa's administration at being kept in the dark by its president, Gianni Infantino, over his World Cup sell-off plan — not only did he keep it secret from many of them, but he then claimed they had done "great work" in setting it up.

Infantino, right, used a tiny clique of officials to work on the plan, most of whom were too junior or too scared to point out that he was effectively selling the soul of football for cash.

Those at Fifa who might have raised the alarm about the idea, such as its chief operating officer, Kevin Lamour, or Arsène Wenger, the head of football development, were out of the loop. Sources said much of the planning work over several months was done by Dan O'Toole, the Irishman who is director of Fifa's executive office, and more junior staff.

After The Times had revealed the plan to sell off stakes in the tournament to private investors last week, Infantino made a futile attempt to rescue it by writing a letter to Fifa Council members, who had also been none the wiser, laying out his idea and concluding "by thanking the Fifa administration for their great work in elaborating this fantastic proposal for world football".

He added: "Obviously this proposal has been elaborated by our experts at the Fifa administration who are working tirelessly at your service."

Lamour's statement 48 hours later put that letter into context: "Fifa's own administration was also deceived. This lie by omission over many months and this unilateral exercise of power are not trivial. They are indicative of a lack of trust, a lack of transparency, a lack of discernment, a lack of good governance. And a serious lack of respect."

Fifa has been approached for comment.

Sculpting support

The man who has been leading the drive for Fifa's reluctant national associations to endorse Infantino is Elkhan Mammadov, the organisation's chief member associations officer.

Mammadov, formerly the general secretary of Azerbaijan's FA, has proved invaluable to the Fifa president before. In October, Infantino announced he would be creating a Fifa Peace Prize but there were only six weeks to commission a trophy — and considerable demands from the White House as to its size — before it was due to be presented to Donald Trump.

Infantino did not have to look far to find someone to design the trophy at short notice: Mammadov's father, Salhab, a sculptor, was found to be available.

Royal connection

The London-based PR firm Milltown Partners, co-founded by Paddy Harverson, the former communications secretary for the royal family, was among those initially promoting the World Cup sell-off scheme. Milltown was working for Thrive Capital — the fund owned by Joshua Kushner, who was lined up as lead investor — as it is a longstanding client.

Incidentally, The Times contacted Thrive Capital and Fifa several hours before publishing the first story about the sell-off but did not receive a response. Fifa replied after publication.

Lessons learnt?

When you have a divisive football-related project that is going to incur the wrath of millions of fans, who are you going to call: JP Morgan.

Only four years after the bank apologised for its involvement in the European Super League, JP Morgan was also revealed to be heavily involved in Infantino's plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors — the Fifa president told council members the bank had valued his proposed new company at $20 billion (about £14.9 billion).

In 2021, after saying it would bankroll the European Super League, JP Morgan said: "We clearly misjudged how this deal would be viewed by the wider football community and how it might affect them in the future. We will learn from this."

JP Morgan, which is also a top sponsor of the International Olympic Committee, has declined to comment on quite how it has learnt from past misjudgments.

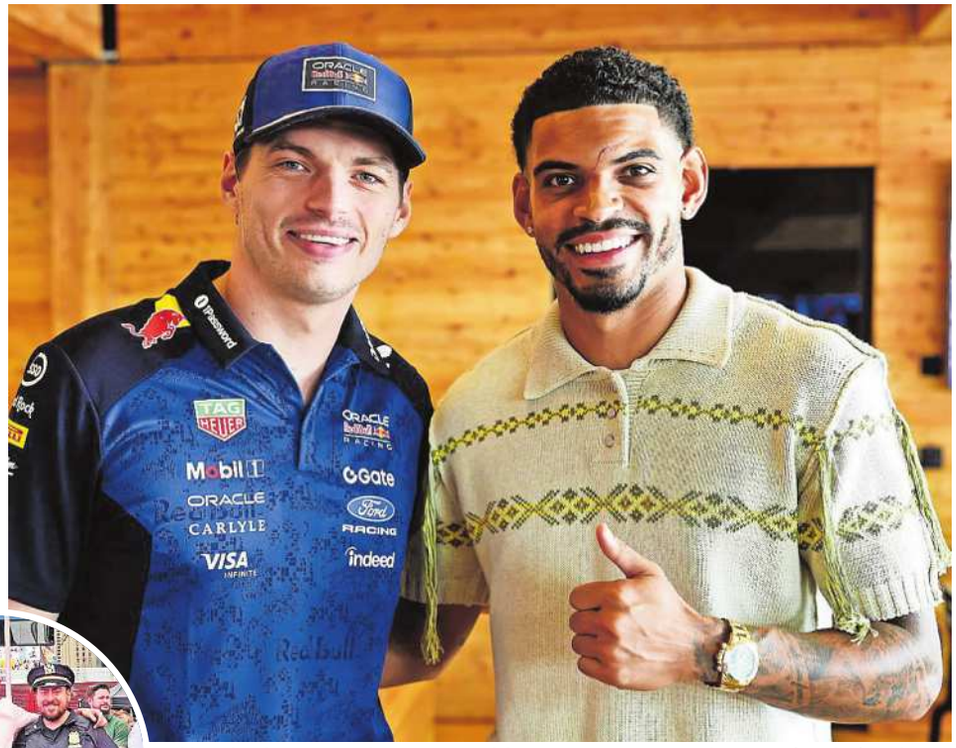
Mexico's hopes

The decision by Mexico's FA to endorse Infantino rather than stick with Concacaf's leadership opposing the Fifa president no doubt reflects its hopes of being awarded the 2029 Club World Cup.

Morocco is also hoping to get the tournament and is Infantino's closest supporter, but it clearly suits him to be able play the bidders off against each other.

Side hustles and Madonna – what England rejects did this summer

Kit Shepard breaks down in five stages what big stars such as Foden, Maguire and Palmer got up to after being omitted from the World Cup squad



Gibbs-White hangs out with Verstappen, while Maguire was in New York as part of Lineker's podcast

Soundbites, fishing, Madonna advertisement. The players Thomas Tuchel controversially left out of England's World Cup squad have had varied summers. While Tuchel's team embarked on an ultimately doomed pursuit of the second star in North America, the high-profile rejects pursued off-field passions and plotted on-field responses.

What exactly does a summer of World Cup omission look like? It can be broken down into five stages …

Rejection reaction

Before thinking about recuperation, players often address the snub publicly. It's a delicate situation. They naturally want to defend themselves but risk accusations of bitterness if they do so. And while articulating emotions is cathartic, players may merely want to compartmentalise the sadness and move on.

Spare a thought for Adam Wharton, then, who was asked about not making the squad barely an hour after winning player of the match in the Conference League final. The Crystal Palace midfielder's answer was polite, diplomatic and weary.

Others were more outspoken. Cole Palmer adopted the wistful approach, telling The Times: "I know what I could have offered." Morgan Gibbs-White went cryptic, saying: "I know I have done more than enough to be in the squad. I got on the wrong side of someone's opinion."

Harry Maguire left no room for ambiguity — nor did his family. The Manchester United defender was "shocked and gutted" by his omission. His wife insisted "there was nothing else you could have possibly done". His mum was "absolutely disgusted". His sister labelled it "crazy". One of his two brothers went for "shambles", the other branded the decision "possibly the worst I've ever seen in my life".

What the Maguire clan made of Tuchel's tactics against Argentina doesn't bear thinking about.

Go on holiday

Once the disappointment was expressed, the next move was a holiday. Europe was a popular destination, with Palmer going to Ibiza, Phil Foden to Marbella and Jarrod Bowen to Greece.

The likes of Foden and Bowen went away with their young families. Amid the agony of watching the World Cup from afar, extended time with their children is a silver lining.

Side hustles

The summer was not solely about switching off. Despite missing the World Cup, some players remained in the limelight through off-field ventures.

Palmer launched his Cole'd premium ice brand that nodded to his nickname and shivering celebration, and it is a crying shame he was not at the World Cup even before his game-changing abilities are considered.

"Cold" Palmer ice cubes during the summer of heatwaves, hydration breaks and late nights watching football in the pub? Sounds like a marketer's dream.

Elsewhere, Maguire was in New York during the World Cup as a guest on Gary Lineker's *The Rest is Football* podcast. He continued to discuss his omission, criticising Tuchel's decision to deliver the news via FaceTime, and his straight-talking style suggests the media is a post-career pathway for the 33-year-old.

There was time for good deeds. Foden supported a tournament led by Rico Lewis that raised money for homelessness charities. Gibbs-White played in a charity golf tournament run by James Maddison.

Foden, meanwhile, had plenty of success fishing, as shown by the pictures of him and his eldest son holding big catches.

Mix it with big names

They may not have been at football's grandest event, but the overlooked players have spent the summer connecting with famous figures.

Foden was next to Marco van Basten in the Royal Box at Wimbledon and also attended the British Grand Prix, where he was pictured alongside Mo Farah and Lewis Capaldi, the singer.

Gibbs-White went to the Monaco Grand Prix and spoke to Max Verstappen. Yet the midfielder committed the cardinal sin of avoiding speaking to Martin Brundle when the broadcaster was on his customary pre-race grid walk.

Maguire was at Royal Birkdale for the Open, where he featured in television coverage and chatted to Tommy Fleetwood. An experience to rival Harry Kane playing golf with Donald Trump in Florida, perhaps.

The wackiest summer activity? Palmer shooting a scene with Madonna — in which he (alongside João Pedro) is approached by the singer in a urinal to promote her new album — will take some beating.

Prepare for the comeback

The social-media posts, holidays and side hustles are all accompaniments to the players' main goal: use World Cup rejection to their advantage. They should be less fatigued than those who did play in the tournament and several are therefore well placed to navigate change at their clubs.

Trent Alexander-Arnold will hope missing the World Cup allows him to cement a starting place at Real Madrid after fitness problems. The 27-year-old has a new head coach to impress in José Mourinho and fresh competition at right back in Denzel Dumfries.

Foden has signed a new four-year contract with City, indicating that he will be a figurehead as his boyhood club transitions from the Pep Guardiola dynasty to a new era under Enzo Maresca. Palmer would be wise to tap into the midfield expertise of his new Chelsea boss, Xabi Alonso.

Others with new head coaches include Wharton (Pierre Sage) and Gibbs-White (Oliver Glasner). Bowen has remained with relegated West Ham and although his loyalty is commendable, playing in the second tier makes his route back into the England squad tougher.

There are plenty of England-related storylines going into the campaign. After the summer started with heartache, the omitted players enter the season refreshed, rounded by unusual experiences and with a point to prove to their nation's head coach.

Barcelona offer City £38.5m for Rodri

Charlotte Duncker

Barcelona have submitted a bid of £38.5 million for Rodri but Manchester City will not let him leave for less than £60 million.

The Spanish champions have started negotiations with City over the 30-year-old midfielder, but their opening offer is well shy of what City would be willing to accept.

Rodri has one year left on his contract and the World Cup winner has made clear his desire to return to Spain.

City, who were hoping to keep him at the Etihad Stadium and had offered him a new deal, would be willing to sanction a sale should the right number be agreed.

Real Madrid had been favourites to land the 2024 Ballon d'Or winner but Barcelona made the player aware of their interest and it is understood he would prefer a move to the Nou Camp.

Rodri has struggled with injuries for the past couple of seasons and is recovering from a minor back operation. However, he was at his best during this summer's World Cup and was named player of the tournament after helping Spain win the competition for only the second time.

As it stands, Rodri is expected back at the City Football Academy next week to begin his pre-season programme after recovering from his surgery.

It is anticipated that Barcelona will return with an improved offer for the Spain captain, who has been at City for seven years, having signed from Atletico Madrid in 2019 for £62.8 million, a club record at the time.

Hansi Flick, the Barcelona manager, is in need of midfield reinforcements after Frenkie de Jong suffered an injury and it would allow Rodri to join up with a number of his Spain team-mates.

Meanwhile, Arsenal are considering renewing their interest in the Juventus winger Kenan Yildiz after missing out on Vinícius Jr, who signed a new contract with Real Madrid.

Arsenal inquired about the 21-year-old Yildiz in June, having tracked him last season. However, the Italian club do not want to sell after giving him a new contract until 2030 in February. Yildiz registered a combined 17 goals and ten assists in Serie A in the past two seasons.

Napoli have been unable to strike a deal with Arsenal to sign Gabriel Jesus. Arsenal want about £20 million for the striker, 29, who has entered the final year of his contract.

FA coy about U20 World Cup discussions with Fifa

Continued from front

global governing body. That includes the FA, which has withdrawn a letter of support for Infantino's re-election, although the organisation was tight-lipped yesterday about discussions surrounding the Under-20 Women's World Cup, in which England are due to compete next month.

The squad, coached by Lydia Bedford, is heading to Portugal for a preparation camp next week. England are due to play their opening game against Canada in Poland on September 5. The support Infantino has received from Mexico and Argentina goes against the position of South America's Conmebol federation, which had expressed concerns over the "repeated unilateral actions taken without resorting to dialogue".

The fallout from the proposal has cast a shadow over Infantino's bid for re-election for a fourth term at the Fifa Congress in Morocco in March. No clear candidate to stand against Infantino, who was in Colombia yesterday, left, has emerged, however.

Meet four new bosses: the rookie, drifter, young gun and the boffin

Coaches at Newcastle, Fulham, Bournemouth and Palace should gain from inherited wisdom. By **James Gheerbrant**

From left: Rose, Sage, Arbeloa and Jaissle are likely to bring some fresh ideas and intriguing tactics to the Premier League

For three months in 2021, José Mourinho, Jürgen Klopp and Thomas Tuchel shared the Premier League stage, as the respective managers of Tottenham Hotspur, Liverpool and Chelsea. Mourinho was sacked that April, and Klopp and Tuchel have also moved on, leaving the English top flight notably bereft of big beasts — especially since fellow managerial mastodon Pep Guardiola also departed at the end of last season.

They may be gone, but of the new managers leading a Premier League club for the first time this season, three are former players of Mourinho, Klopp and Tuchel: respectively, Álvaro Arbeloa of Fulham, Bournemouth's Marco Rose, and Newcastle's new man, Matthias Jaissle. Pierre Sage, recruited by Crystal Palace, rounds out an intriguing quartet who are looking to make their mark on English football. Who are they, what have they achieved in their careers, and what can we expect from them?

Álvaro Arbeloa, Fulham

Age 43
Previous teams as head coach
Real Madrid B (2025-26), Real Madrid (2026)

Arbeloa, of course, is the best known of this quartet to followers of English football, having spent 2½ seasons at Liverpool between 2007 and 2009, and ended his career with a less memorable stint at West Ham United. After retiring in 2017, he did his badges and returned to Real Madrid in 2020, where he worked his way up — starting off as coach of the under-14 team, then the under-19s, then the B team, Castilla — to the big job.

He won his first five La Liga matches, but back-to-back losses against Osasuna and Getafe changed the mood and allowed Barcelona to overtake Real in the league, a lead they would not relinquish. Real dropped points in a further four of their remaining games, culminating in a 2-0 loss to Barcelona that handed the title to their rivals.

In the Champions League, Arbeloa negotiated knockout ties against Benfica and Manchester City, the latter a 5-1 aggregate victory that was probably his most impressive result, before Real succumbed to Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals. His 28 games at the helm of *Los Merengues* represent the entirety of Arbeloa's management career in senior first-team football.

"Two months as Real Madrid coach is like a master's degree," he said. Newly graduated, Arbeloa takes his cap and gown to another white-shirted outfit.

Marco Silva established Fulham as the epitome of mid-table solidity but that belies the peril of Arbeloa's assignment. Fulham have been the oldest team in the Premier League, by average age weighted by each player's minutes played, in each of the past four seasons, and they have lost their two top scorers from last season, Harry Wilson and Raúl Jiménez, who between them scored 40 per cent of Fulham's goals.

Gonzalo García and César Palacios, well known to Arbeloa from Real, have replaced them. Gentle, genteel Fulham is a world away from the punch-ups and front pages Arbeloa had to deal with in Madrid, but in other respects this is a difficult posting that could expose an inexperienced manager.

Marco Rose, Bournemouth

Age 49
Previous teams as head coach
Lokomotive Leipzig (2012-13), Red Bull Salzburg (2017-19), Borussia Mönchengladbach (2019-21), Borussia Dortmund (2021-22), RB Leipzig (2022-25)

Leaving aside his first job at Lokomotive Leipzig, Rose had a superb start to his management career. At Salzburg, he won two league titles, reached the semi-finals of the Europa League, beating Borussia Dortmund and Lazio, and didn't lose a home game in two years. Gladbach led the Bundesliga after 14 games in his first season there, and eventually finished fourth. At that point, Rose was looking like seriously hot property.

His work since then has been less convincing. A second-place finish with a Dortmund team containing Jude Bellingham and Erling Haaland was decent, but losing 6-4 on aggregate to Rangers in the Europa League was poor. In three seasons at RB Leipzig he won the German Cup, but their Bundesliga returns diminished and they were dreadful in last season's Champions League, losing seven out of eight games.

But clubs as smart as Bournemouth don't look only at outcomes. Fit and playing style are paramount, and Rose's high-pressing, vertical, four-at-the-back methodology should segue nicely from Andoni Iraola's. "We will try to adjust small bits, some little details and minor structural things, but we will not change the approach," Rose told The Athletic.

A devout Christian who played for six seasons under Klopp at Mainz, Rose isn't quite in the same league as the charismatic leader, but he is a good communicator and likeable guy who should "get" the family feeling of a relatively small club like Bournemouth. This is the sort of assignment that could reinvigorate a career that has begun to drift.

Matthias Jaissle, Newcastle

Age 38
Previous teams as head coach
Liefering (2021), Red Bull Salzburg (2021-2023), Al-Ahli (2023-26)

Now that Jaissle has been confirmed as Newcastle head coach, he is the second-youngest manager in the division, after Fabian Hürzeler. He played under Tuchel in the youth teams of VfB Stuttgart, made an appearance for Germany Under-21 and won promotion to the Bundesliga with Hoffenheim in a brief playing career cut short by injuries.

He is even more steeped in Red Bull football than Rose: he started off as a youth coach at Leipzig, then Salzburg, with a brief spell as assistant manager at Brondby in between. His first head coach job was at Salzburg's feeder club, Liefering: he took them to second in the Austrian Bundesliga, equalling their best finish. That got him the gig at Salzburg, where he won two league titles, including one double. Moving to Al-Ahli in Saudi Arabia was an unexpected swerve but he did well there, winning back-to-back Asian Champions Leagues and getting the best out of a squad that included Ivan Toney, Riyad Mahrez and Roberto Firmino.

Clearly, Jaissle inherits a difficult situation at Newcastle, with Anthony Gordon, Sandro Tonali and Bruno Guimarães leaving and the club embarking on a rebuild with young, unproven signings. Having worked in Saudi Arabia with stellar players in the autumn of their career, it's a big shift, but his time in the Red Bull machine means he's no stranger to a youth project and his preferred systems, 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2 diamond, should fit the squad well. It's a huge challenge to follow the popular Eddie Howe, amid some very evident constraints, but this is an exciting appointment.

Pierre Sage, Crystal Palace

Age 47
Previous teams as head coach
Chambéry (2013), Lyon (2023-2025), Lens (2025-26)

Here's a fact that sounds unlikely but is true: Crystal Palace are the only Premier League club in the past 8½ years to have appointed a French manager. They tried it with Patrick Vieira in 2021, and now Sage joins his compatriot Régis le Bris, who took Sunderland up from the Championship, in the Premier League.

Sage is our odd man out: he was an amateur player who started coaching at 16. His has been a remarkable rise: in his twenties he worked in behind-the-scenes managerial roles at such little-known clubs as Oyonnax Plastics Vallée and FC Bourg-en-Bresse Péronnas. Aged 33, he got his first head coach job, at Chambéry in the fourth tier, but he lasted only 13 games.

He then bounced around a few clubs as assistant manager or youth coach before his big break, when Lyon promoted him from academy manager to interim manager of the first team after Fabio Grosso's dismissal. Sage rescued that season, steering Lyon from last place to sixth and a French Cup final. That earned him the job on a full-time basis, but he was sacked halfway through the next season with the team sixth. Last summer he was hired by Lens and oversaw a superb season: finishing second in the league and lifting the French Cup, with a squad of few stars.

Sage studied in Portugal for a master's degree in tactical periodisation, the methodology that counts Mourinho and Marco Silva among its devotees. It treats every aspect of the game as interconnected and aims to get players to problem-solve in real game situations. He is seen as a smart, undogmatic and highly adaptable manager.

Palace have one of the biggest Francophone contingents in the league — Ismaila Sarr, Jean-Philippe Mateta, Chadi Riad, Jaydee Canvot and the forgotten man Cheick Doucouré — and so appointing a French manager with a track record of overachievement makes a lot of sense.

Diego and Hugo Maradona

Jude and Jobe Bellingham

Tomike and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia

Eclipsing big brother a rare feat but this teen could do it

From the Bellinghams to Maradonas, **Ian Hawkey** says following big bro is hard but there's lots of hope for Kvaratskhelia Jr

Ten minutes into his first start in Uefa club competition, the hint of déjà vu. The teenaged winger takes the ball on his right instep, close to the left touchline. There's something familiar in the crouch of his shoulders and, as he ups his running speed, in the way he extends his right arm like a rudder, the better to maintain his balance.

Now he's into his duels, approaching the edge of the Zalgiris penalty area. Two opponents close in. He feints to the left, darts to the right and he's breezed his way between them. He slaloms past a third defender and then there's a moment of slapstick as markers four and five collide. By the time they've composed themselves, they're looking at the back of his shirt, his long surname spelt out in the Mkhedruli alphabet. It's Kvaratskhelia.

He is Tornike Kvaratskhelia and if last month's personal milestone, the debut in European club football for Dynamo Tbilisi, came with a chastening lesson on how steep the hierarchy of professional football can seem — Dynamo turned a three-goal advantage with just over half an hour left of their Conference League qualifier against Zalgiris into a two-goal aggregate loss — it was still a significant landmark.

The younger Kvaratskhelia has played on the outer margins of a European stage that perhaps no footballer has illuminated so thrillingly over the past 18 months as his brother, Khvicha, winner of back-to-back Champions League titles with Paris Saint-Germain.

Tornike is only 16 but startlingly advanced, according to Temur Ketsbaia, the Dynamo head coach who gave him his Uefa club debut. "He has nothing to envy Khvicha for," said Ketsbaia, the former Newcastle United winger, beaming at the teenager's courage against brutal tackles and his maturity. "He works hard and I hope he'll meet all the expectations."

Tornike is already ahead of where his superstar sibling, nine years older, was at the same age of his mazy journey to Paris, via Moscow, Kazan, Batumi and a golden period in Naples, where Khvicha became known, in homage to Napoli's greatest past player, as "Kvaradona".

These are early days for "Little Kvaradona". But forecasts other than Ketsbaia's also suggest he should rise higher up the ladder than, say, Maradona Jr. Hugo Maradona, younger brother of the stellar Diego, was a moderately successful footballer in the 1980s and 1990s around whom there lingered a suspicion that when he was taken on by clubs in Italy and Spain, where Diego starred for Napoli and Barcelona, the lure of the surname had attracted the hiring clubs almost as much as what Hugo might offer to their midfields.

Thus the mixed blessing, sometimes the burden, for the younger sporting sibling, the follower in distinguished fraternal footsteps, a select group who this summer could scarcely be left unmoved by one of the storylines around the World Cup final.

"Brother," posted Iñaki Williams, the Athletic Bilbao captain after watching Nico Williams set up the only goal for Spain against Argentina. "You have touched the sky, carried our name into eternity. I admire you, I love you, world champion."

Nico, eight years younger than his pioneering brother (who played in the same World Cup for Ghana, where their parents were born), is the loved, admired figure who pays tribute to his fraternal guidance every time he wears a Spain jersey — it says Williams Jr, emphasis on the Jr — and who thanks Iñaki almost every time he reflects on the moments when his older brother has admonished him for the odd step out of line.

> "The most notable thing Digão did for Milan was giving Kaká his name"

Nico, the Serena to Iñaki's Venus, is about to embark on his eighth season in the same Athletic forward line as his brother, a sustained professional partnership that has resisted some vigorous attempts by grander sides to prise Williams Jr from the club they grew up

Iñaki and Nico Williams

Dribbles like Mbappé and rapid: Chelsea's £47m man

Marco Palestra was Serie A defender of the year last season and should be a good fit, writes **Peter Rutzler**

DARREN WALSH/CHELSEA FC/GETTY IMAGES

The 21-year-old joins an illustrious list of Italians who have played at Chelsea

Transfer agreed, contract signed and photographs taken, but Marco Palestra still had one more important task to complete after joining Chelsea: find the nearest Italian restaurant.

"It was one of the first questions I asked," he says, with a smile. "English food is … not bad, but for me, Italian food is a little bit better."

Palestra went straight to Grappelli, an Italian eatery in Cobham, near the club's training ground, a venue he has been to more than once, and he has also tried a couple of restaurants in London too. "The first day I went with my family, and the other days with my friends who helped me come from Italy," he says. "I paid!"

Palestra, who signed from Atalanta for £47 million last month, joins a respected list of Italian recruits who have graced Stamford Bridge. The 1990s were a golden era, of course, led by Roberto Di Matteo, Gianluca Vialli and Gianfranco Zola; the latter coincidentally ended his career at Cagliari, the club where Palestra caught the eye last season during a loan spell.

"I didn't call him but I know Zola played at Cagliari and at Chelsea, he's a legend," Palestra says. "Maybe I can do what he did at Chelsea." Become a legend? "Maybe, maybe. I hope."

He did speak to Davide Zappacosta, who signed for Chelsea in 2017 and was his team-mate at Atalanta. "He always told me good things about Chelsea. I know a lot of Italian players played here. I want to be the next top one."

Palestra, a 6ft wingback with thick, bushy hair that he constantly flicks out of his eyes, is a confident 21-year-old. As he takes his seat to speak to a group of reporters, in a sky bar at the Chelsea team hotel in Sydney, he cautions that his English is not perfect and to speak slowly, yet that belies his grasp of the language, only struggling once for the right vocabulary — to describe the work of his parents, who were office workers in Milan and would drive him day after day to Bergamo, an hour away, to help him make the grade at Atalanta. "If you're happy, we're happy," he says of their advice.

Palestra is an intriguing signing. He was the Serie A defender of the year last season, thanks to his strong, lung-bursting displays in Sardinia. Arrigo Sacchi, the legendary Milan coach, was among those leading calls for his first international call-up, which duly followed in March for the World Cup play-offs against Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Italy wilted, his stock held firm.

Inter Milan were competing with Chelsea for his signature and there was a pull there: his grandfather once played in their academy and he did too, briefly. "Not the proper academy," he says, referring to a development team. "Afterwards, I joined Atalanta, I was maybe ten or 11."

Xabi Alonso, the new Chelsea manager, spoke to Palestra to persuade him. "He told me what he wanted from me, his ideas and other things," he says. "Not only football. Yes, football, for sure, but not only. It was a good conversation about everything, so I was very happy with it. He likes me because he sees a lot of games from me. He likes my flexibility and because I can play on the right, the left, lower, high.

"For me, all the coaches are different. They have different ideas, but I like the football of Xabi. All the team-mates like the football of Xabi — it's a beautiful idea, so I'm happy to train and play the first matches with Xabi and my team-mates. For me, we can do a good season."

There was a message from the Chelsea captain, Reece James, once the deal had been done.

"[It was a] beautiful message and I said hi to him when he came to Cobham one day after the World Cup," Palestra says. "I know he is a good guy, a good captain, so I can't wait to play with him also. I'm very happy — I know he is a good guy.

"He said to me that he is happy I joined Chelsea and to write to him for advice, to know London, Cobham."

27.96

Average sprint speed in km/h Palestra was clocked at in Serie A, which made him the league's fastest man

Palestra's profile should make him a good fit for the Premier League. He has strong athleticism and is noticeably quick, traits that have already singled him out in his pre-season appearances. Last season he was clocked as the fastest player in Serie A, with an average sprint speed of 27.96km/h.

"When I was young, like 15, I remember I was the slowest one in the team but after maybe one or two years, I grew physically and I changed position," he says. "Before I played in midfield, but I changed position to left back or at the back, because I was quick. When I was young, I'm the slowest. It's crazy, crazy."

He is not sure yet if he is the quickest in his new team. "I need to race all of the team-mates," he says. "[For] now, I don't know."

He is a good dribbler too and statistically ranks among Europe's best; no defender in Europe's big five leagues made more successful take-ons last season, and he is not far behind Kylian Mbappé and Jérémy Doku either. He also won more ground duels than Manchester City's new midfield recruit Elliot Anderson.

Alonso is yet to trial a back-three system, which brought him so much success with Bayer Leverkusen, but Palestra's arrival, along with the impending move for Pep Chavarría, of Rayo Vallecano, hints that it may be an option this term. Alonso says he wants his team to be flexible, and Palestra was exceptional for Cagliari in a wingerless 3-5-2 formation.

"At the start of the season, I can't imagine that I would win Serie A defender of the year, it's a big honour to be the best defender but I know that it is only the start," he says. "I need to improve myself every day but it's a good start.

"I hope [to repeat it in the Premier League], maybe it's difficult but I said the same at the start of the last season. I try to do my best. The first thing I want is to win for Chelsea. It's always the team. If after the season, I also win the defender of the year, I am happy, but I prefer to win something for Chelsea and nothing for me."

There were brief conversations with Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori and Manchester City's Gianluigi Donnarumma, his Italy team-mates, before signing, and there is also motivation to help Italy too, and add to his two caps.

"For sure, Italy is not in their best moment of their life," Palestra says. "It's a good thing I came to the Premier League because it's the best league in the world. I can prove myself more. Me and all the guys that play for Italy, but also [in] the Premier League.

"We can help Italy go to the World Cup, to win something. Italy are one of the best nations in the world for their history. I know if we start with a good mentality, a clean mentality, because it's important, I know we can win the World Cup and the Euros."

with and offer him a better chance to add major club trophies to the European Championship and the World Cup that are now on his résumé. A factor in keeping Nico Williams in Bilbao has been the strong brotherly bond.

No such privilege for Lyon, although the anticipated emergence of a gifted younger brother there is promising some compensation for the disappointment of the club having lost the generational talent that is Rayan Cherki to the voracious transfer market 12 months ago.

Eden Cherki is only 14 but, at age-group level, already displaying the nimble turns and close control reminiscent of his elder sibling, 22, now of Manchester City and a France player.

A little more advanced in the career ladder is Jobe Bellingham, about to start his second season at Borussia Dortmund, the club that launched Jude Bellingham's top-division career at 17. The junior Bellingham has reached the same age, 20, that Jude was when he debuted for Real Madrid, having just joined from Dortmund for more than €100 million.

No such giant leap is anticipated this summer for Jobe, but the prospects for consolidating his progress are high. If Dortmund head coach Niko Kovac lines up his notional XI for the forthcoming campaign in tomorrow's pre-season game at Arsenal, Jobe Bellingham should start in central midfield.

And if the Jobe-focused marketing paraphernalia surrounding Dortmund's summer tour to Japan is a guide, the club are not shy of maximising the broader Bellingham brand to promote their image as a launchpad for young talent.

A parallel pathway like that of the Bellinghams can be comforting for the successor in the family line, but also invite close, hard comparison and make an unforgiving mirror on relative rates of progress. At the age of 18 Jude, already voted as newcomer of the year in his debut Bundesliga season, was setting up two goals against Bayern Munich to endorse the impression of the player's uncanny big-match temperament; Jobe's first *Klassiker* against Bayern drew disproportionately severe scrutiny because of a defensive error, soon after he came on as a substitute, that contributed to Bayern's winning goal.

Sometimes the shadow of a brilliant forebear can just seem impossibly long. A few years back a visit to AC Milan's practice headquarters at Milanello could be momentarily confusing if a young man bearing very similar facial features to the club's star player happened to wander past. You'd do a double-take and realise this was in fact Digão, a Brazilian central defender whose career, to put it kindly, never touched the foothills of that of his brother, Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite, alias Kaká.

Digão's association with Milan appeared to have been designed principally around the role of fraternal companion. We learnt that Digão was apparently the source of Kaká's nickname, having struggled as a child to say "Ricardo". Six years passed and we learnt little more. As one Italian newspaper caustically noted: "By far the most notable thing Digão has ever done for Milan was giving Kaká his name." He made a single Serie A appearance for Milan in the year Kaká won the Ballon d'Or and spent much of the half-dozen seasons of his contract on loan at a series of lesser clubs.

A rosier inheritance would await Thorgan Hazard, who as a young winger quickly shook off the scepticism that he had followed his older brother Eden to Chelsea in 2012 mainly as some sort of chaperone.

Thorgan went on to win 47 caps for Belgium and this summer closed the circle on an odyssey that has taken him to clubs in the top divisions of his native country, of Germany and of the Netherlands, returning to the first stop-off of his senior career, Lens, of France's Ligue 1.

He is 33. Which means he has at least outlasted Eden — who brought the curtain down on his mostly dazzling playing days at 32 — even if he never quite emulated a brilliant big bro.

‘Keely brings out my playful side.

Georgia Hunter Bell reveals to **Rick Broadbent** how friend and rival has helped her to be more daring — such as riding a bike with no hands

Georgia Hunter Bell and Keely Hodgkinson are separated by eight years and one-hundredth of a second. At least that was the gap when Hunter Bell pipped her friend and 800m superstar on the line at last year’s World Championships. You might think a sliver like that would provoke a festering envy, even resentment, but instead the silver and bronze medallists went to a karaoke lock-in in Tokyo and duetted on *Unwritten* before Hodgkinson did *My Way* with Hunter Bell’s dad. “It was a pretty rough morning,” the senior partner says.

That sequence shows the unique relationship between two of Britain’s finest sportswomen. Next week Hunter Bell, 32, is back in the 1,500m at the European Championships in Birmingham with Hodgkinson, 24, facing a lip-smacking 800m duel with 2026 breakout act Audrey Werro, of Switzerland.

Hunter Bell still wants to double up at some point, which will bring her back into Hodgkinson’s domain, but they are a symbiotic double act. Injuries and niggles have tainted Hodgkinson’s sheen of invincibility before Birmingham, but she is a generational talent who can point to a troubled preamble to explain that bronze-medal disappointment in Japan.

Hunter Bell, meanwhile, was lost to the sport at Hodgkinson’s age, having got through college in the United States and felt her interest ebb away, before returning home, where she worked in cybersecurity until 2024. It was remembering that sense of loss and confusion that prompted the tears when she won the Commonwealth Games 800m gold in Glasgow last week, a sixth international medal in two years since making her senior GB debut after that long hiatus.

“I was thinking of the young woman version of myself who gave up and really didn’t know what she was doing with life,” she said in Glasgow before being shepherded away to do more gilded interviews and take a call from the absent Hodgkinson.

Via Zoom from her training camp in Portugal, she digs deeper into that past. “It was a weird experience,” she says of quitting at 24. “I’d say the first year I was very relieved and happy to be done with running. I was in San Francisco, was working in tech sales and loving being a young professional and no longer having the stress and strain of running. I embraced that, but when I moved to London a year or two later it really hit me. I was like, ‘Oh my God, I thought my life was going to end up one way and now I’m on a different track.’

“I look back at that time in my life and I feel sorry for *that* Georgia because she was just quite unhappy. I wasn’t excited for life at all. I wasn’t looking forward to things, wasn’t doing well at my job, wasn’t being a good friend, wasn’t in good relationships. I was just not thriving or happy.”

She worked through that, but it is interesting that Hodgkinson, who endured some depressive episodes after winning Olympic silver at 19, is now around that same age. For Hunter Bell, the carefree spirit of her young friend has helped as much as having an elite training partner. “She’s very playful, always joking, having fun, and that brings out that playful side in me more so than when I meet up with my 30-year-old friends and we’re talking about babies and buying houses. I’ve learnt a lot from Keely. One thing is she feels she can do anything, and that’s rubbed off on me. When you get a bit older you can get set in your ways and think, ‘I’ve never done that before.’”

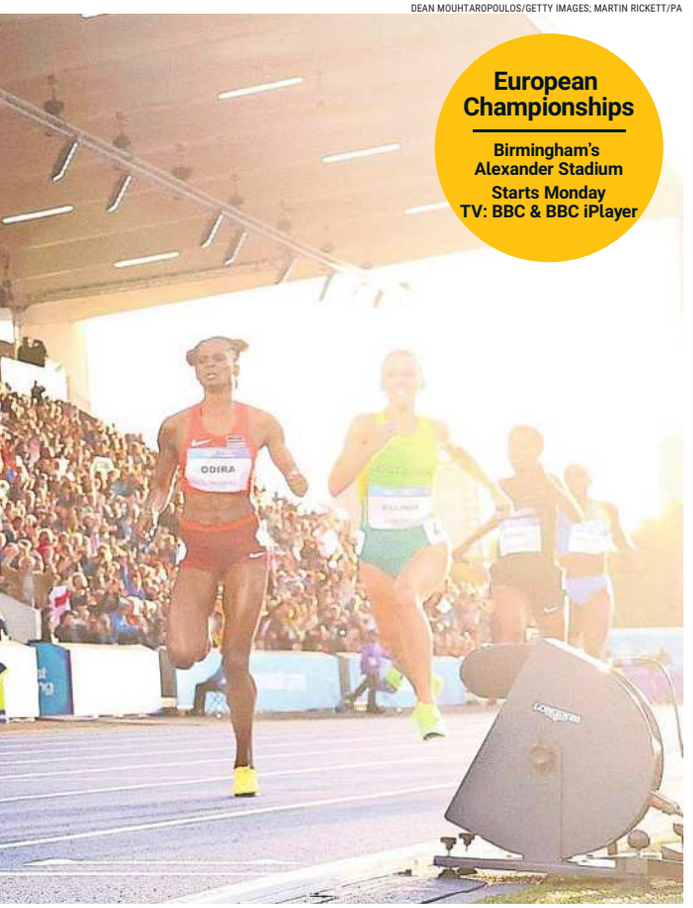
Hunter Bell channels the can-do spirit of Hodgkinson, inset left, as she wins Commonwealth 800m gold in Glasgow. The

She cites one example. Hunter Bell has been cycling for years, winning the duathlon title for the 30-34 age group at the Ibiza Multisport World Championships in 2023, but Hodgkinson took it up last year. “She said we have to learn to cycle with no hands,” Hunter Bell says. “I said, ‘Oh my God, no, we can’t do that, what if we fall?’ She just said, ‘We won’t.’ And then we’re cycling along in South Africa with no hands. I wouldn’t have done it if I wasn’t with her.”

There are more anecdotes that show how Hodgkinson is keeping Hunter Bell young, pricking at the need for total precision and the athlete’s natural obsessiveness. At this year’s World Indoor Championships in Poland, Hodgkinson’s bag went missing and she had no spikes. Where some would have spiralled into panic, she just borrowed a pair from a local runner. Hunter Bell says: “I’ve had a few things go wrong in the run-up and now I’m like, ‘You know, it’s OK.’

I have learnt a lot from her'

DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES; MARTIN RICKETT/PA



32-year-old and her husband, George, right, plan to start a family at some point

That's down to Keely. Hopefully, she gets some things from me." She pauses at that thought. "I wonder what she'd say."

Hunter Bell won the 1,500m in Poland and Hodgkinson won the 800m. The husband and wife coaching pair Trevor Painter and Jenny Meadows have steered them to a heady 16 international medals since 2021. Hodgkinson has taken centre stage via her Olympic 800m crown of 2024, but Paris-born, London-bred Hunter Bell had an Olympic 1,500m bronze that year despite giving up her day job only a few months beforehand. She still does not know if she prefers the 800m or 1,500m. "I have a lot of romance with the 1,500 because of that fairytale year and Paris, but the 800 was my original event and I really like it," she says.

Doing the double is still her goal, but she says things have changed since 2004 when Dame Kelly Holmes won Olympic gold at both, with tactical races having made way for relentlessly fast scraps. "It's hard on the body, but I will double at some point," she says, with conviction. "Until then I'm just kind of floating in between."

She concedes she would need to try the double before the LA Olympics in 2028, which basically means next year's World Championships. And if she then does it in LA she will have to race an 800m final one night and come back for 1,500m heats the next. Is that possible? "It's really hard to sleep the night after a race, so a round the next morning is brutal. I'd be surviving off two hours' sleep, max."

When she could not decide whether to double up at last year's World Championships, she called Holmes for advice. "She went through the schedule of events with me and said, 'I'd have loved this timetable.' But she also said I hadn't even done a major championship 800 then and that lack of experience was an issue."

The team actually took a vote, with Hunter Bell, her husband, George, and Meadows voting against the double, and only Painter saying she should try. Expect the mothballed dream to be dusted off next year.

Can she and Hodgkinson stay friends if they are hunting the same prize? Meadows believes they are too strong as people for either to pull the plug, but adds: "Let's just hope the rivalry is still healthy for two years because you can see how these things turn — not that I think it will."

Hunter Bell explains that their M11 training group is bereft of "bitchiness" because of the collective will to push parameters. Meanwhile, Femke Broeders-Bol, the Dutch 400m Olympic hurdler and another friend of Hodgkinson, has also moved into her event. With friends like these and all that. "It's going to be what breaks all these barriers," Hunter Bell insists of the competition and potential world-record runs. "You have to do what's right for you. These lives aren't for ever."

For the moment, she is focusing on the longer distance in Birmingham. Only three years after teaming up with her old coach, Painter, having rekindled her love via lockdown park runs, she is the 11th-fastest ever over 1,500m and the second-fastest ever in Europe. The upshot is she is also the favourite in Birmingham. If Hunter Bell wins again it will be three major international titles in barely five months.

Making up for lost time, she will turn 33 in October, and although she is lightly raced given the time away from the sport, life is accelerating too. If London's £45 million bid for the 2029 World Championships is successful, she would like to keep competing until then, before taking a break.

"We want to have a family at some point. I used to think it was quite taboo to have a baby as an athlete, that it meant you weren't serious and didn't want to come back, but now we see so many women doing it, greats like Beatrice Chebet, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and Faith Kipyegon, who is the GOAT. Starting a family will give a new purpose and perspective, but if these last two years have shown me anything it's that you really have no idea what's going to happen."

Back in that Tokyo karaoke bar, Hunter Bell, still unshowered and wearing her speed suit after coming straight from anti-doping, showed that she and her singing partner have the same taste. "That song is hard because it just keeps getting higher and higher," she says of their choice. The future is *Unwritten* too, but the co-leads are hitting the right notes as they raise the bar.

Pole makes history on Ventoux to lead Tour

Cycling
Sean Russell

Kasia Niewiadoma-Phinney took the Yellow Jersey of the Tour de France Femmes on the slopes of Mont Ventoux to become the first woman to win on the Giant of Provence at the Tour.

The Polish Canyon-Sram rider started the day in third overall, 1min 17sec behind Marlen Reusser. However, she carried out a devastating attack on Reusser and Demi Vollering with nine kilometres to go and never looked back on her way to victory.

It was Reusser who shredded the peloton after leaving Bédoin and before the official categorised climb of Ventoux began with 15.6km to go. Then it was the turn of Vollering, who started the day in second overall, to launch the key attack with 11km left.

Her plan was to drop Reusser, who was shorn of team-mates, on the steeper sections of road, knowing the Swiss rider would do better on the shallow gradients higher up. But when Vollering looked around to survey the damage, she saw two riders on her wheel: Niewiadoma-Phinney and Reusser.

It was Niewiadoma-Phinney who made the decisive move, however. With 9km to go, the 2024 Tour de France Femmes winner jumped her rivals and soon had a gap of 13 seconds. Reusser and Vollering struggled to organise and continued to watch each other.

By Chalet Reynard, where the road leaves the shaded forest and transforms into a sun-bleached moonscape, Niewiadoma-Phinney's gap was almost a minute. Still Reusser and Vollering refused to work together, or perhaps simply did not have the legs, and watched the time slip away. With 5km Niewiadoma-Phinney reached the gap she needed: 1min 17sec.

In the final kilometre Vollering managed one final attack to leave Reusser behind and limit the damage. She stays second overall, 15 seconds behind Niewiadoma-Phinney, while Reusser slips to third, 39 seconds behind with just two hilly stages left around Nice.

Coe and Ovett did it, so why no hybrid 800-1,500m stars now?

Analysis

The lore of British athletics is sustained by Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett at Moscow 1980, and Kelly Holmes's double-take on the finish line at Athens 2004. Gaze into the middle distance, though, and you will see a modern generation in its own gilded age (Elgan Alderman writes).

Ben Pattison and Max Burgin are behind only Coe in the British men's 800m all-time rankings, and Josh Kerr and George Mills are the top two over 1,500m. Keely Hodgkinson, Georgia Hunter Bell and Jemma Reekie have gone faster than Holmes over 800m, as have Hunter Bell, Laura Muir and Katie Snowden over 1,500m.

What they lack, mostly, is hybrid threat. Jake Wightman — No 7 in the all-time national rankings for 800m and No 4 for 1,500m — and Hunter Bell, owner of an Olympic 1,500m bronze and world 800m silver, have interest in twin pursuits, yet the chances of them emulating Holmes with a pair of golds at a single Games are slim. That is not a British problem. It is rare everywhere.

There are only two athletes entered in the 800m *and* 1,500m at the European Championships in Birmingham next week: Poland's Filip Ostrowski and Lithuania's Gabija Galvydyte. Edwin Flack, Jim Lightbody, Mel Sheppard, Albert Hill, Peter Snell, Tatyana Kazankina and Svetlana Masterkova all won double gold at the Olympics in the 19th and 20th centuries, but no one has managed it since Holmes in 2004.

Some of the reasons are clear. Try watching two sports matches in the pub at the same time; you probably end up seeing neither. In the modern age of specialism, it's difficult enough to make it through the rounds of one event, let alone two, as overall standards improve. Consider Moscow 1980. Neither Ovett nor Coe ran under 1min 48sec in their 800m heats, and they were just under 1:47 in their semi-finals. Forty-four years later in Paris, all three British men broke 1:46 just to make it through the first round.

"When you look at world rankings over both distances on the men and the women's side, both of them are incredibly competitive these days," says Dr Richard Blagrove, reader in applied exercise physiology and athlete performance at Loughborough University. "Right at the very top, the difference in performance isn't that different compared to 10 or 20 years ago, but if you have a look at the average time for 10th and then 20th and then 50th in the world, the standards have been increasing quite a lot.

"Athletes go into championships thinking, 'If I've got two or three rounds of an 800m in my legs and I've got to do the 1,500m, I'm going to jeopardise my chances of getting through the rounds because I've got to be on the ball for every single race.' Most of the runners say in their interviews, particularly at the semi-final level, they're treating them like finals because the competitors are so closely matched that they have to run the races pretty much flat out or at least with some excellent tactics in order to progress."

That's just one distance. Compete in two and an athlete faces six races in nine days. A man seeking the double at Paris 2024 would have had to run his 800m heat the morning after the 1,500m final, about 16 hours later. Travelling, warming up, signing autographs and media interviews contribute to fatigue. "The biggest challenge is just the recovery from five to six races," Blagrove says. "It depends how long the championship is, but usually seven to eight days is incredibly tough."

The distances require different mixes of sprinting (anaerobic) and endurance (aerobic). "Energetically, 800m is roughly two-thirds contribution from aerobic sources, creating and using energy with oxygen, and then the other third comes from anaerobic sources, creating energy without oxygen," Blagrove says. "The 1,500m is a little bit more aerobic than that, that's closer to 80 per cent aerobic and about 20 per cent anaerobic. You can see they're fairly close. They complement each other quite well in that respect."

Hodgkinson competes over 400m to work on her speed, though she is unlikely ever to double up properly. "There's a bigger difference between the 400m and 800m than the 800m and 1,500m," Blagrove says. "Purely because the bioenergetics and the way that athletes are producing energy in the 400m is quite unique. It's a much more speed-orientated and anaerobic event."

In Birmingham, Hunter Bell will compete over 1,500m only, though she maintains an interest in both events. The stopwatch would rank her as the finest hybrid middle-distance runner Britain has had on the women's side. Finishing on the top step twice at one event, or indeed any levels of the podiums, would be quite something.

Sport Rugby union

Ex-All Black and a 100-cap veteran: England World Cup bolters to watch

One year before warm-ups for tournament begin, **Charlie Morgan** picks out some surprising and emerging options Steve Borthwick may have his eye on this term

Nehe Milner-Skudder, a star of the 2015 World Cup with New Zealand, is regarded as an archetypal bolter because of how quickly the wing emerged and how his beguiling talent allowed him to break into a team of all-time greats. Timing is everything. With a fair wind, fantastic form and the right circumstances, rookies can rocket out of nowhere over the months leading up to a global tournament.

We may be only a year away from the World Cup warm-ups, yet England could certainly accommodate a couple of fresh — or returning — faces to shake them up. Here are a few to monitor over the forthcoming Gallagher Prem season.

Archie McParland

Northampton Saints, scrum half

Days after the Prem final, Richard Wigglesworth, England's defence coach, said McParland, 21, was "really in the mix" to feature during the first block of Nations Championship fixtures. A nasty cut just above his knee had ended McParland's involvement in the domestic showpiece and sidelined him for the summer.

In November 2024, an appearance off the bench for England A against Australia at Twickenham was a surefire sign that the Northampton Saints scrum half would be fast-tracked through the development pathway; McParland was only 19 at that stage and still eligible for England Under-20.

His short time in the senior ranks at Saints has not been entirely smooth sailing. There have been charged-down kicks and intercepted passes, but his biggest misstep came in the Champions Cup quarter-final against Bath. Choosing a quick tap penalty over a routine three points resulted in a turnover, ultimately costing Northampton in a dramatic 43–41 defeat. Yet McParland has learnt from his mistakes, impressing over the second half of the season in Alex Mitchell's absence.

He ties in defenders around the fringes of rucks and runs smart support lines when hunting a second touch after making a pass, exuding comfort on the ball. McParland's passing and kicking have continued to improve and, standing 6ft, he is a committed defender too.

Jack van Poortvliet performed well for England in July and Raffi Quirke was flown out to Argentina as cover when Mitchell suffered another hamstring problem, but McParland will remain in the picture. He is already back in training with Saints — where he has developed good chemistry with Fin Smith and Tommy Freeman — and is well suited to playing a possession-based game, a tactical approach that is yielding high rewards.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: If, as expected, McParland continues to start for Saints, it is easy to see him being handed a Test debut this season, at which point it will be up to him to seize his chance. Mitchell went from England's fourth-choice No 9 to starter in 2023, so the pecking order can change rapidly.

Joe Marchant

Sale Sharks, centre

There are a couple of entrants here that stretch the definition of "bolter". Marchant is the first, but Steve Borthwick will consider reintegrating the 30-year-old at the earliest possible opportunity. In mid-May, the England head coach revealed he had been in contact with Marchant and had watched "each and every one" of his games for Stade Français. Borthwick was "delighted" that Marchant's move to Sale Sharks made him eligible for England selection again. Marchant, who will also become eligible for Wales in late October after three years out of the Test game, split his time in Paris between outside centre and wing, as he did for England at the 2023 World Cup. Borthwick covets versatility and wants lateral mobility in the No 13 channel.

As much as England need clarity on their midfield mix as 2027 comes into view, there are various options. Max Ojomoh and Benhard Janse van Rensburg are pushing for involvement behind Seb Atkinson and Henry Slade, with Ollie Lawrence and Fraser Dingwall likely to occupy the outside centre role. Orlando Bailey and Luke Northmore are among the centres to have featured for England A. Watch out for Olly Hartley and Oscar Beard as well.

Marchant, however, with 28 England caps, is more experienced than most other budding centres.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: It would be a surprise if Marchant does not return to training squads immediately. Assured performances for Sale in September and October would be a bonus.

Kepu Tuipulotu

Bath, hooker

Borthwick took Jamie George, Luke Cowan-Dickie and Theo Dan on tour this summer but there is a gaggle of hookers vying to break into the Test team. They can be split into two groups. Jamie Blamire, Curtis Langdon and Gabriel Oghre, all of whom are 28 and have featured for England A, have impressed at Prem level and are regular starters for their clubs.

Below them is a second bracket of tyros: Nathan Jibulu, Craig Wright and Tuipulotu. The last-named is the youngest of them, turning 21 at the beginning of September. He is skilful and explosive with a low centre of

From left: Hendy, Van der Flier and McParland are among the England prospects expected to benefit from more Prem game time this season

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gravity, which helps when close carrying and jackalling. Bath have handed Tuipulotu only two league starts thus far, but he could get more game time this season.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: Throwing accuracy and scrummaging solidity will be the sticking points. None of these hopefuls will play in significant matches under Borthwick without consistency in those areas. Blamire, Langdon and Oghre are probably ahead, though Tuipulotu does offer something different.

Archie van der Flier

Leicester Tigers, loose-head prop

Van der Flier was called up after the Prem semi-finals for a brief stint in England camp. While he was surplus to requirements for the uncapped game in Vannes, with Asher Opoku-Fordjour and Beno Obano selected as the loose-head props, it was a reward for the 24-year-old's excellent campaign. This coming season, with Nicky Smith now at Sale, Van der Flier should benefit from more chances to start — even with Mako Vunipola in the East Midlands as a mentor.

Burly, mobile and improving as a scrummager, Archie is the cousin of the Ireland flanker Josh van der Flier and was picked up by Tigers after impressing for Nottingham in the Champ. Emmanuel Iyogun deserved his selection against Argentina for his first England appearance, and Borthwick's front-row options will be boosted by the returns of Fin Baxter and Will Stuart.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: Van der Flier would need to benefit from injuries to others to jump the queue. Still, should he progress as well as he did last season, during which he picked up an England A appearance, then Leicester will have a serious player on their hands — one who will be primed for the Test team during the next World Cup cycle.

> **"Lawes is on an unapologetically determined quest to make his fifth World Cup**

George Hendy

Northampton Saints, full back

Borthwick can clearly change up his back three by picking Noah Caluori and it must be tempting to examine another specialist full back given George Furbank's misfortune with injuries. Joe Carpenter made his first England appearance a year ago, while Josh Hodge and Ben Redshaw have featured for England A. Slade filled in at No15 against Fiji and Argentina in July as back-up to Marcus Smith.

Adam Radwan, Paul Brown-Bampoe and the forgotten man Ollie Sleightholme could also be back-three bolters. The rangy Hendy, nicknamed "Bendy Hendy" during his time at Bedford Blues in the Champ, would add more Saints familiarity to England's back line and the 23-year-old has an uncanny knack of beating defenders with his loping gait.

His priority this season will be to improve his high-ball security and back-field positioning. Hendy may begin the season as Saints' first-choice full back while highly rated James Pater builds his confidence.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: Rare England A outings suggest that Hendy is viewed as a wing by Borthwick, but more excellent displays for Northampton will help his cause and he could overtake Cadan Murley and Tom Roebuck.

Courtney Lawes

Sale Sharks, flanker

England's pivot from a scavenging back row to deploying a taller blind-side flanker, with Ollie Chessum supplementing Alex Coles and George Martin, is good news for Lawes, who is on an unapologetically determined quest to play in his fifth World Cup. There is an element of the unknown about whether Lawes can hit the ground running in the Prem after two seasons in the French second tier, but Lawes, who has 105 caps, is no normal 37-year-old.

He left Saints in 2024 when he was playing at a stratospheric level and is fiercely motivated by his goal to play for England again. It is difficult to imagine England suffering lapses in discipline with Lawes in their ranks. As for Sale, his influence on back-five forwards such as Ben Bamber and Tom Burrow will be worth the wages alone.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: We will have to wait and see what Lawes offers on the pitch, but he will not have to play many of the nine Tests before next summer's extended World Cup pre-season.

Hoskins Sotutu

Newcastle Red Bulls, flanker

Greg Fisilau must have been close to featuring for England in the Nations Championship. Sam Underhill has undergone shoulder surgery and will be like a coiled spring going into the new season. Ben Curry, who has an enhanced Elite Player Squad contract, will also be champing at the bit after a long injury layoff. Chandler Cunningham-South and Ted Hill suit the bigger blind-side flanker profile, with Tom Pearson, Emeka Ilione and Jack Kenningham all likely to be invited to training camps.

There is a real scramble for places in England's back row and an ex-All Black is now eligible, having joined Newcastle and served the requisite stand-down period since the last of his 14 New Zealand appearances in November 2022.

In his best moments for Counties Manukau and the Blues — and even at Test level — Sotutu, 28, has linked attacks beautifully while offering pace and punch with ball in hand.

Likelihood of making World Cup squad: Ben Earl and Henry Pollock appear to be Borthwick's frontrunners at No8. They could have company very soon if Sotutu, a specialist in that role, settles quickly at Newcastle.

New Zealand tested in opening victory

Stormers	**21**
New Zealand	**38**

Elgan Alderman

Competition between New Zealand and South Africa for oval-ball supremacy did not die in 1996, when the All Blacks won a series in South Africa for the first time, and now the branded, fundraising exercise of Rugby's Greatest Rivalry is alive. The domestic curtain-raiser offered enough strife for the All Blacks to believe that the eight-game tour could be one to savour.

Though the All Blacks looked superior throughout against franchise opposition, this was not the mismatched result modern tour games can threaten to be. Deon Fourie, a month shy of his 40th birthday, is one of the few men with memories of 1996 and the old Springbok hybrid forward spearheaded Stormers' limited yet decent effort.

After the pyrotechnics, anthems and haka, New Zealand demonstrated the same speed of attack from Dave Rennie's first three Tests as head coach. Peter Lakai broke up the middle in the opening minute, Beauden Barrett employed a variety of cute kicks and there was a quickly taken lineout before Samisoni Taukei'aho crossed.

Stormers, in cahoots with Karl Dickson's whistle, slowed down the fixture to their preferred pace. The first four scrums yielded penalties, three of them for Stormers, and the All Blacks were down to 13 men for a time.

Stormers' first score came in a moment of low farce. After Anton Lienert-Brown's yellow card for his upright tackle on Jonathan Roche, André-Hugo Venter crossed at the back of a maul. After Yaqeen Ahmed's conversion, the officials thought the home pack may have broken away illegally. The score was ruled out, but Simon Parker was sent to the sin-bin for the build-up of infringements, having been offside before the breakaway. Clear as mud, and then another thud as Fourie did what Venter had just done.

Stormers did not capitalise on their advantage. The All Blacks were so attack-minded that they put the ball through their hands in their own 22, even with a man in the bin. The reduced pace affected their fluency. Josh Moorby overcomplicated a pass and Billy Proctor knocked on when a try appeared inevitable.

There would always be opportunities, though. There were six internationals in the Stormers squad but five of their best are representing the Springboks in Buenos Aires this weekend. Their defence left all kinds of holes for Rieko Ioane before Cortez Ratima's tap penalty and smart handling put Parker over in the corner.

Fourie won a turnover penalty in his own half and, from the resulting lineout, popped a short pass to Seabelo Senatla, who ran through untouched. The veteran departed just after the hour, bloodied and content with his work.

Stormers believed now, and Neethling Fouché sprinted off the line, smacking the debutant Siale Lauaki backwards. Sam Darry beat two South African attackers to a smart grubber over the line. It was as close as Stormers came to the unforgettable upset. Ioane took advantage of the All Blacks' better speed of thought and deed, restoring their lead.

Dewaldt Duvenage had to depart and, with both back replacements exhausted, there was no specialist scrum half for the final 12 minutes. Against a reshuffled defence, Leroy Carter's try ended the contest and Moorby's charge-down stretched the lead, though the full back was then shown a yellow card for illegally preventing Warrick Gelant's try. Asafo Aumua finished off with another maul effort.

Draper aims for Cincinnati despite tears in Montreal

Tennis

Tom Kershaw
Tennis Correspondent

Jack Draper is optimistic of playing in the Cincinnati Open, allaying fears his long-term arm injury could condemn him to another spell on the sidelines.

The former world No4 made his comeback at the Montreal Masters this week but broke down in tears, inset, during the final set of his first-round defeat by Térence Atmane.

Draper's serve speed dropped and he resorted to drop shots near the end of the match, suggesting he was in pain and plunging his prospects of playing the US Open into doubt.

The bone bruising in his left arm has afflicted Draper for nearly 18 months, causing his ranking to plummet to No143. He returned from a six-month layoff in February but played only four tournaments before he suffered a knee injury. Draper reached the Eastbourne semi-finals in June, but his arm flared up and he pulled out of Wimbledon.

It appears the frustration over such a brutal run of luck rather than a serious injury was the root of Draper's tears, however, and he has continued training in North America before the Cincinnati Open, which begins next Thursday. Draper has received a wild card for the event, which will also serve as a chance to prove his fitness and competitiveness before the US Open.

Draper was outside of the main draw cut-off for the final grand-slam of the year, which starts on August 30, and so he will need to come through qualifying if he does not receive a wild card. The 24-year-old is entered into the revamped US Open mixed doubles with Jessica Pegula the week prior to the main draw, but it is likely he will have to withdraw if he is in qualifying.

Organisers are hoping Serena Williams and Carlos Alcaraz will play together in the event, but the pair are yet to formally enter. Williams will make her first appearance since losing in her singles comeback at Wimbledon when she teams up with her sister Venus for the Cincinnati women's doubles.

Sport Racing

Moore can lead GB & Ireland to victory in Shergar Cup

Rob Wright
Racing Editor

Ryan Moore has ridden just once at the Dubai Shergar Cup, emerging as top jockey after partnering a double on this card 20 years ago, and he looks set to stage a repeat at Ascot today.

Moore, 42, is regarded by many as the best in the world but is usually required by trainer Aidan O'Brien to ride elsewhere while this annual team jockeys' competition is staged. He is available this time around, though, and can again claim a double through **Asgard's Captain** and **Archers Bay**.

Asgard's Captain looked a little unlucky when fifth in the Shergar Cup Challenge (2.45) 12 months ago, finishing strongly but never able to land a blow behind Night Breeze. He meets that rival on 8lb better terms this time around and can come out on top this time. Archers Bay can defy top weight in the Shergar Cup Classic (3.55). He was a fair fourth in a higher grade at Newmarket and, with this step up in trip in his favour, can outclass this field.

Moore is joined in a strong GB & Ireland team by Dylan Browne McMonagle, who has landed two classics in a breakthrough season, and Saffie Osborne, who has a fine record at Ascot. The combination are hot favourites to emerge victorious but Christophe Lemaire can make an impact for the Europe team, with prospects of a double of his own through **Hermetic** and **Bullet Point**.

Trainer Ian Williams has a good record with French imports and Hermetic was a good fourth in the Northumberland Plate at Newcastle. He has solid claims in the Shergar Cup Stayers (2.10), meeting favourite Shrimp Shady, who was two places behind him at Newcastle, on 3lb better terms.

Lemaire can also strike on the William Haggas-trained Bullet Point. This front-runner showed useful form last year and, while he has yet to show his best in two starts this term, he shaped better than the result suggests after being hampered at Newbury last time. Fitted with cheekpieces for the first time, he could be tough to pass.

Haggas also has good prospects with **Thunder Call** in the Shergar Cup Sprint (3.20). He will be ridden by Jerry Chau, who represents the Hong Kong team, and has long been a fan of Moore. "When I became interested in racing I would watch YouTube of Ryan Moore riding in all of the group ones in Dubai, Ascot and Hong Kong," he said. "To ride against him is a dream. I used to play video games and choose to ride at Ascot and now I'm here riding for real."

ROB WRIGHT'S WEEKEND GUIDE

Big-race trends
Rose of Lancaster Stakes
(2.25 Haydock Park)
This race rarely attracts a large field and those at the head of three betting have dominated, with four favourites and one joint-favourite winning in the past seven years. Sallaal is likely to extend that run

Repeat performance?
Night Breeze
(2.45 Ascot)
Landed this 12 months ago when ridden by Australian jockey Robbie Dolan. He will be partnered this time by Irish rider Dylan Browne McMonagle, who has had the Midas touch recently. Should again go well

Banker or bust?
Fallen Angel
(3.00 Haydock Park)
This top-class filly was below-par over further on her return at York but she is a five-time group one winner who escapes a penalty in this lower grade. Hard to beat back at her best trip. BANKER

What's in a name
Calendar Girl
(3.00 Haydock Park)
This filly is cleverly-named, bringing in elements from both her sire, Advertise, and dam Plucky Lass. She looked good when winning three of her four starts last year but has been off the track for ten months

Red-hot trainer
Charlie Appleby
Godolphin's main trainer had a quiet May/June but has been building momentum since then and has a strike-rate of over 50 per cent this month. He has seven runners today

Bet of the day
Mysterious Times
(2.30 Newmarket)
Unlucky when a close third here in June, he again ran well when second to the promising Flann Sunna at Ascot. This step up in trip will suit and he can defy top weight

Ascot
Rob Wright

1.35 Kendall Roy
2.10 Hermetic
2.45 Asgard's Captain
3.20 Thunder Call
3.55 Archers Bay
4.30 Bullet Point

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage
Sky Sports Racing

1.35 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Dash (Handicap) ITV
(£41,803: 5f) (10 runners)

1	(3)	-00103	**KENDALL ROY** 15 (T,D) Miss K McGivern (Ire) 5-10-2	F Valle Skar		◆104
2	(4)	0-1610	**TUCO SALAMANCA** 7 (T) Ollie Sangster 4-10-0	C L Chau		87
3	(8)	-11000	**FAHRENHEIT SEVEN** 42 (P,D) R Cowell 5-10-0	S Osborne		94
4	(7)	310430	**FANDOM** 7 (D) R Hannon 5-9-12	Suraj Narredu		98
5	(5)	-00000	**SPARTAN ARROW** 99 (B,D) A Watson 6-9-11	R L Moore		86
6	(11)	0-3011	**ALL WAYS GLAMOROUS** 14 (CD) C Mason 5-9-11	M Velon		97
7	(6)	-16560	**GAELI** 43 (B,D) P Kirby 5-9-10	Y Take		97
8	(1)	-11150	**GOLD STAR HERO** 7 (P,D) M Bell 4-9-8	C Y Ho		92
9	(9)	610036	**BOLO NEIGHS** 14 (P,C) R Beckett 4-9-7	C P Lemaire		93
10	(2)	4-0100	**CINQUE VERDE** 11 (D) A Carroll 6-9-6	Jamie Melham		95

4-1 Bolo Neighs, 11-2 Tuco Salamanca, All Ways Glamorous, 13-2 Fandom, 15-2 Kendall Roy, Spartan Arrow, Fahrenheit Seven, 16-1 Cinque Verde, Gold Star Hero, 20-1 Gaeli.

Rob Wright's choice: Kendall Roy was a close third in a valuable handicap at Cork; should again go well **Dangers:** Spartan Arrow, Gold Star Hero

2.10 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Stayers (Handicap) ITV
(£41,803: 2m) (10)

1	(2)	4-3040	**SPIRIT MIXER** 42 (D) A Balding 8-9-10	S Osborne		72
2	(5)	03-060	**LAVENDER HILL MOB** 53 (P) James Owen 5-9-8	Jamie Melham		63
3	(7)	02-035	**KILMEADEN** 43 (T) Faye Bramley 4-9-7	C Y Ho		88
4	(3)	40-005	**DANCING IN PARIS** 15 (C) I Williams 6-9-6	L Ferraris		87
5	(10)	412161	**SHRIMP SHADY** 21 (D) A Balding 4-9-6	R L Moore		90
6	(9)	0/4351	**MOUNTAIN ROAD** 69 (D) J Goldie 7-9-3	Y Take		87
7	(4)	-02631	**MARNIER** 36 (P) G & J Moore 4-9-3	Suraj Narredu		87
8	(6)	00-000	**ONEFORTHEGUTTER** 29 (T,C) I Williams 7-9-2	M Velon		84
9	(11)	-43500	**POLE STAR** 29 C Johnston 4-9-0	D Browne McMonagle		88
10	(8)	14-464	**HERMETIC** 42 (D) I Williams 4-8-11	C P Lemaire		◆96

3-1 Shrimp Shady, 7-1 Kilmeaden, 8-1 Hermetic, 10-1 Pole Star, Mountain Road, Marnier, 12-1 Spirit Mixer, Dancing In Paris.

Wright choice: Hermetic ran a cracker when fourth in the Northumberland Plate at Newcastle; more to come **Dangers:** Shrimp Shady, Pole Star

2.45 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Challenge (Handicap) ITV
(£41,803: 1m 4f) (10)

1	(12)	000510	**CLAYMORE** 35 (C,D) J Chapple-Hyam 7-10-2	C L Chau		◆99
2	(10)	220-20	**INSANITY** 50 (CD) A King 6-10-1	M Velon		97
3	(11)	0/052-	**FRANCES ETHEL** 248 (D) W Haggas 6-10-0	C Y Ho		85
4	(7)	341233	**NIGHT BREEZE** 11 (T,CD) I Williams 6-10-0	D Browne McMonagle		94
5	(5)	310000	**ENEMY** 35 (P,T,C,D) I Williams 5-9-12	F Valle Skar		89
6	(9)	341406	**ASGARD'S CAPTAIN** 29 (D) D Cunha 6-9-8	R L Moore		86
7	(8)	-66023	**CASTLE STUART** 28 R & P Fahey 4-9-8	L Ferraris		93
8	(6)	001310	**SPORTINGSILVERMINE** 28 (D) James Owen 5-9-8	Y Take		91
9	(1)	60-504	**FANTASY BELIEVER** 15 (C) E Walker 9-9-6	S Osborne		87
10	(3)	2-0041	**STEM** 35 R Hannon 4-9-6	Jamie Melham		90

4-1 Night Breeze, 6-1 Insanity, Frances Ethel, 13-2 Asgard's Captain, 7-1 Castle Stuart, 8-1 Fantasy Believer, 10-1 Stem, 12-1 Claymore.

Wright choice: Asgard's Captain was given too much to do when fifth in this race 12 months ago **Dangers:** Night Breeze, Sportingsilvermine

3.20 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Sprint (Handicap) ITV
(3-Y-O: £41,803: 6f) (10)

1	(10)	6-3030	**HAVANA HURRICANE** 28 (C) E J-Houghton 10-2	F Valle Skar		99
2	(7)	310-44	**SHAATIR** 116 (B,D) A Watson 9-13	L Ferraris		77
3	(9)	6-3300	**MAY ANGEL** 30 (T) J & T Gosden 9-13	C P Lemaire		94
4	(3)	211245	**RED SPELLS DANGER** 14 (D) T Easterby 9-11	S Osborne		93
5	(5)	-04646	**FIGJAM** 29 (D) K Scott 9-11	C Y Ho		◆100
6	(12)	10022-	**AMERICAN GULF** 310 (D) Oliver Cole 9-11	Suraj Narredu		--
7	(1)	1-4664	**JEL PEPPER** 39 (H,D) S C Williams 9-11	M Velon		86
8	(6)	152-10	**CAPE ASHIZURI** 56 (D) J & S Quinn 9-10	D Browne McMonagle		92
9	(11)	02-113	**THUNDER CALL** 30 (BF,D) W Haggas 9-10	C L Chau		91
10	(2)	22115	**GRASMERE BOY** 14 (D) J Camacho 9-10	Y Take		91

2-1 Thunder Call, 9-2 Red Spells Danger, 10-1 American Gulf, Cape Ashizuri, 14-1 May Angel, Jel Pepper, Figjam, 16-1 Havana Hurricane, Grasmere Boy, 20-1 Shaatir.

Wright choice: Thunder Call was third in a competitive handicap at Newmarket; remains unexposed **Dangers:** Red Spells Danger, May Angel

3.55 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Classic (Handicap) ITV
(3-Y-O: £41,803: 1m 4f) (10)

1	(7)	1-1304	**ARCHERS BAY** 29 (P) M Botti 10-2	R L Moore		◆93
2	(3)	34-111	**HOSEKI** 29 (CD) W Haggas 9-12	S Osborne		88
3	(6)	1-232P	**BALTIC FLEET** 10 (V) I Williams 9-10	C L Chau		81
4	(10)	04202	**BLUE HERCULES** 28 W Muir & C Grassick 9-10	Jamie Melham		87
5	(9)	-32422	**PIERRE GROSSE** 20 (P) J Harrington (Ire) 9-9	L Ferraris		85
6	(4)	120212	**ROYAL POETRY** 14 (BF,D) R Hannon 9-4	Y Take		80
7	(8)	213134	**KING OF BERKSHIRE** 28 (D) A Balding 9-3	C P Lemaire		80
8	(1)	04-142	**LEVEL LOOK** 6 (BF) A Balding 9-2	F Valle Skar		73
9	(5)	1-0020	**OHARA** 14 E J-Houghton 9-0	D Browne McMonagle		78
10	(11)	53-013	**LAST VERSE** 10 (P,D) J Parr 9-0	Suraj Narredu		77

15-8 Hoseki, 7-2 Archers Bay, 7-1 Pierre Grosse, 8-1 Blue Hercules, 12-1 Ohara, Royal Poetry, 14-1 Level Look, 16-1 Baltic Fleet.

Wright choice: Archers Bay ought to appreciate this stiffer test after his fourth in a stronger race at Newmarket **Dangers:** Hoseki, Pierre Grosse

4.30 Dubai Duty Free Shergar Cup Mile (Handicap) ITV
(£49,180: 1m rnd) (10)

1	(9)	425042	**CERULEAN BAY** 8 (D) D O'Meara 5-10-1	Jamie Melham		100
2	(10)	000020	**TWO TRIBES** 7 (B,BF,C) R Spencer 5-9-13	D Browne McMonagle		100
3	(12)	-40032	**CROWN BOARD** 14 (D) J Chapple-Hyam 6-9-12	F Valle Skar		103
4	(1)	-16100	**MISTER WINSTON** 8 (D) A Balding 4-9-12	C L Chau		103
5	(7)	-04430	**EBT'S GUARD** 8 (CD) W Muir & C Grassick 5-9-12	Suraj Narredu		103
6	(11)	2214-0	**FONDO BLANCO** 51 (T,D) R Varian 4-9-11	M Velon		◆104
7	(2)	100-00	**BULLET POINT** 84 (P,D) W Haggas 5-9-10	C P Lemaire		87
8	(6)	220044	**POPMASTER** 35 (C,D) E Walker 8-9-6	L Ferraris		97
9	(8)	-00000	**OZAT** 8 (D) I Williams 5-9-6	R L Moore		94
10	(5)	450010	**SERENGETI** 50 (T) M Murphy 4-9-5	C Y Ho		96

4-1 Ozat, 5-1 Bullet Point, 6-1 Cerulean Bay, 8-1 Crown Board, Ebt's Guard, Two Tribes, 12-1 Mister Winston, 16-1 Fondo Blanco, Popmaster, 33-1 Serengeti.

Wright choice: Bullet Point shaped better than the result suggests at Newbury; has slipped in the weights **Dangers:** Ozat, Cerulean Bay

Haydock Park
Rob Wright

1.50 Brighton View
2.25 Sallaal
3.00 Fallen Angel
3.34 Christian David
4.09 Black Endeavour
4.40 Lost Signal (nb)
5.10 Phantom Watch

Going: good-good to firm in places
Draw: 7f-1m, low numbers best
Racing TV

1.50 Betway Leigh Handicap
(3-Y-O: £5,234: 1m 2f) (6)

1	(5)	-01021	**BRIGHTON VIEW** 6 (D) W Knight 9-13(6ex)	O Murphy		73
2	(1)	10-604	**MANDARIN SPIRIT** 25 K Ryan 9-9	K Stott		73
3	(3)	4-5410	**RELENTLESS HERO** 42 (D) A Balding 9-6	C T Keane		70
4	(4)	3-3352	**SAXOPHONIST** 16 D O'Meara 9-6	D Tudhope		◆74
5	(2)	63400	**CLAYTONS KOLATONIC** 54 D F Davis 8-7	R Dawson		51
6	(6)	5-0053	**LC TIFFEN** 12 L Williamson 8-4	Molly Gunn (5)		49

10-11 Brighton View, 7-2 Saxophonist, 4-1 Relentless Hero, 8-1 Mandarin Spirit, 25-1 Claytons Kolatonic, 33-1 Lc Tiffen.

2.25 Betway Rose Of Lancaster Stakes ITV
(Group 3: £53,874: 1m 2f) (5)

1	(3)	10-154	**CONVERGENT** 30 (D) K R Burke 9-9-10	C Lee		118
2	(4)	110-14	**DANGER BAY** 28 (D) E Bethell 4-9-7	D Tudhope		106
3	(5)	1113-0	**NAHRAAN** 53 (BF,D) J & T Gosden 4-9-7	O Murphy		109
4	(1)	35-211	**SALLAAL** 36 (H,D) R Varian 4-9-7	R Dawson		◆120
5	(2)	06433-	**SEA SCOUT** 287 (D) S & E Crisford 4-9-7	J Doyle		101

10-11 Sallaal, 11-4 Nahraan, 5-1 Danger Bay, 15-2 Convergent, 33-1 Sea Scout.

Wright choice: Sallaal looked good when landing a listed race at Sandown Park; she can continue her rise through the ranks **Danger:** Nahraan

3.00 Irish Stallion Farms EBF Dick Hern Stakes (Fillies' & Mares' Listed) ITV
(£39,697: 1m) (11)

1	(4)	/05-31	**ALOBAYYAH** 52 (D) W Haggas 4-9-4	T Marquand		96
2	(1)	1-3032	**AVIATRICE** 23 (D) D Marnane (Ire) 4-9-4	C Lee		92
3	(3)	1110-4	**FALLEN ANGEL** 86 (P,C,D) K R Burke 5-9-4	J Doyle		◆106
4	(7)	4116-5	**MAEVA** 113 (T,D) C Fellowes 4-9-4	R Dawson		79
5	(11)	-10243	**MOSTAR DREAMS** 13 (C,D) A Keatley 5-9-4	O McSweeney		86
6	(9)	31-140	**NOCHE CLASICA** 52 (D) E Bethell 4-9-4	D Tudhope		96
7	(5)	24-151	**RUMBA NUMBA** 11 (D) R Varian 4-9-4	J Mitchell		88
8	(8)	5-0432	**BLINGY'S SISTER** 13 H Palmer 3-8-11	O Murphy		90
9	(10)	1211-	**CALENDAR GIRL** 302 Owen Burrows 3-8-11	C Rodriguez		93
10	(6)	122-53	**PACIFIC MISSION** 63 (T) A Balding 3-8-11	C T Keane		91
11	(2)	1-602	**SILENCIOSA** 35 Tom Clover 3-8-11	K Shoemark		93

8-11 Fallen Angel, 9-2 Alobayyah, 8-1 Pacific Mission, 10-1 Calendar Girl, 14-1 Noche Clasica, 16-1 Rumba Numba, 20-1 Blingy's Sister, 25-1 Silenciosa.

Wright choice: Fallen Angel was below-par on her return at York but she ought to be too classy for these rivals **Dangers:** Alobayyah, Calendar Girl

3.34 Betway Ashton Heath Handicap
(£7,851: 7f) (7)

1	(4)	301421	**CRIMSON SPIRIT** 10 (D) D & C Kubler 5-10-2	T Marquand		92
2	(1)	0-0020	**PELLITORY** 10 (D) D O'Meara 4-10-1	D Tudhope		95
3	(7)	210-00	**YANIFER** 29 (D) H Bethell 8-9-12	O McSweeney		85
4	(2)	13-403	**WECHAAD** 28 (D) R Varian 3-9-10	Doubtful		◆96
5	(5)	034545	**CHRISTIAN DAVID** 14 (B,D) R Hannon 5-9-8	S M Levey		87
6	(3)	305000	**NEW IMAGE** 7 (V,D) D O'Meara 6-9-3	O Murphy		84
7	(6)	2-2131	**MOONSHINE** 59 E Walker 3-8-12	K Shoemark		75

11-8 Crimson Spirit, 9-4 Moonshine, 9-2 Christian David, 12-1 Pellitory, 14-1 Yanifer, New Image.

4.09 Betway Tanners Bridge Handicap
(3-Y-O: £5,234: 7f) (10)

1	(8)	-03632	**GALBA** 10 (BF) K Frost 9-10	C Whiteley (5)		69
2	(10)	603121	**NORCROSS BROW** 11 (D) Charlie Clover 9-10	L Wright (5)		68
3	(1)	333530	**COMPRADOR** 49 (P) A Brittain 9-7	C Lee		40
4	(4)	-65316	**BLACK ENDEAVOUR** 30 (T) M Rimell 9-7	K Shoemark		69
5	(6)	4-0104	**NAPOLIAN** 11 D O'Meara 9-7	D Tudhope		◆71
6	(7)	1-0001	**CRAFTY BLUE** 17 (P,D) R Hannon 9-7	S M Levey		69
7	(3)	240212	**FLYTA** 11 (T,D) M Loughnane 9-7	J Mitchell		70
8	(9)	3-0551	**BERLINETTA** 12 J Channon 9-5	G Bass		67
9	(5)	-44252	**NORFOLK BLUE** 15 (V) W Knight 9-5	O Murphy		69
10	(2)	-10004	**HORACE WALLACE** 49 R & P Fahey 9-4	O McSweeney		51

11-4 Norcross Brow, 9-2 Crafty Blue, 5-1 Galba, 6-1 Black Endeavour, 7-1 Berlinetta, 10-1 Flyta, Norfolk Blue, 16-1 Napolian.

4.40 Betway Capital City Handicap
(£16,200: 1m) (14)

1	(6)	24-106	**COSI BELLO** 28 (C) C Fellowes 4-10-3	T Marquand		97
2	(1)	000001	**WITCH HUNTER** 7 (D) R Hannon 7-10-2	S C Cronin (5)		81
3	(7)	60-002	**YORKSHIRE** 21 (T) E Bethell 6-9-13	C Rodriguez		93
4	(5)	0300-0	**STAR ANTHEM** 91 C Cox 4-9-13	K Stott		83
5	(9)	110	**MOUNTAIN CAT** 51 (P,D) S bin Suroor 3-9-10	S Donohoe		89
6	(13)	56-100	**SKIPPER** 75 (B,D) H Al Jehani (UAE) 5-9-10	J Doyle		90
7	(11)	-00601	**ARCTIC THUNDER** 18 (D) E Walker 5-9-9	K Shoemark		88
8	(4)	0-1000	**TILTED KILT** 29 (P,D) W Knight 4-9-6	O Murphy		77
9	(14)	206150	**LEADMAN** 14 D O'Meara 6-9-5	D Tudhope		84
10	(2)	311-20	**LOST SIGNAL** 75 R Hannon 3-9-5	S M Levey		◆98
11	(10)	5000-0	**KING CASPER** 29 (C,D) A Brittain 4-9-3	R Dawson		75
12	(8)	644521	**INSPIRED** 23 (D) K R Burke 4-9-0	C Lee		79
13	(12)	455214	**FINANCER** 14 (B,C) T Easterby 5-8-12	O McSweeney		77
14	(3)	100500	**TRIPLE DOUBLE A** 36 (W,P,T,D) H Palmer 4-8-11	H Vigors (5)		75

5-1 Arctic Thunder, 11-2 Mountain Cat, 7-1 Cosi Bello, 8-1 Inspired, Yorkshire, Witch Hunter, Lost Signal, 12-1 Financer.

5.10 Betway Apprentice Handicap
(3-Y-O: £5,234: 1m) (8)

1	(5)	2-1011	**SUGGY** 8 (D) C Hills 10-2	H Vigors (5)		56
2	(1)	51-550	**DIRECTOR'S CUT** 40 (D) R Burdon 9-12	C Planas		65
3	(2)	23-412	**PHANTOM WATCH** 43 (V,BF,D) H Palmer 9-12	L Wright		74
4	(3)	-30015	**HOME HERO** 2 (V,D) H Palmer 9-11	L Catton		◆77
5	(7)	255122	**SANDY CRAIC** 10 D O'Meara 9-8	C Whiteley (3)		71
6	(8)	555	**FOREVER ENDLESS** 32 K Frost 9-7	S C Cronin		63
7	(6)	44-001	**SUNSHINE AND ROSES** 18 J Channon 8-11	Rose Dawes		69
8	(4)	050060	**GOLDEN MABEL** 8 (H) L Williamson 8-7	M Slater (5)		56

13-8 Suggy, 4-1 Phantom Watch, 9-2 Sunshine And Roses, 5-1 Sandy Craic, 8-1 Home Hero, 16-1 Forever Endless, Director's Cut, 100-1 Golden Mabel.

Newmarket
Rob Wright

1.55 Graceful Song
2.30 Mysterious Times (nap)
3.05 Danse Royale
3.40 Angel Hunter
4.14 Runswick
4.50 Brave Nation
5.23 Jack Langley

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage
Racing TV

1.55 Newsells Park Stud Sweet Solera Stakes (Fillies') ITV
(Group 3: 2-Y-O: £42,532: 7f) (7)

1	(6)	31	**CHINA IN YOUR HAND** 21 (CD) C Fellowes 9-2	P Bradley		86
2	(3)	1	**GRACEFUL SONG** 22 (CD) C Appleby 9-2	B Loughnane		87
3	(2)	3536	**HARLEQUIN SKY** 14 J Chapple-Hyam 9-2	S De Sousa		92
4	(4)	41	**MARTINET** 15 (D) Sir M Prescott 9-2	J Gilligan		72
5	(5)	14	**NUIT D'ECLAIR** 14 K P De Foy 9-2	D Egan		◆96
6	(1)	41	**SUGAR YES PLEASE** 30 E J-Houghton 9-2	C Bishop		72
7	(7)	3	**TIE A NAVYRIBBON** 22 W Stone 9-2	Josephine Gordon		65

11-8 Graceful Song, 5-2 Nuit D'Eclair, 5-1 Harlequin Sky, 10-1 Martinet, China In Your Hand, 16-1 Sugar Yes Please, 33-1 Tie A Navyribbon.

Wright choice: Graceful Song scored in fine style on her debut here despite looking in need of the experience **Danger:** China In Your Hand

2.30 William Hill Epic Boost Nursery
(2-Y-O: £5,154: 7f) (8)

1	(1)	332	**MYSTERIOUS TIMES** 29 (BF) C Appleby 9-10	B Loughnane		◆83
2	(3)	331	**EABHA** 30 (D) E J-Houghton 9-5	C Bishop		81
3	(5)	31	**BETTY BOOP** 29 R Hughes 9-5	N Callan		81
4	(7)	21	**SANBONA WARRIOR** 21 (D) W Knight 9-2	M Ghiani		78
5	(4)	4324	**RHODES RUNNER** 16 R Beckett 9-0	H Crouch		77
6	(2)	303	**DESERT LEGEND** 14 R Hannon 8-12	D Egan		76
7	(8)	422	**REGAL TIGER** 19 (BF) H Palmer 8-11	D Probert		73
8	(6)	5514	**THEHEATISON** 19 Nick Scholfield 8-9	S De Sousa		73

9-4 Mysterious Times, 9-2 Eabha, Betty Boop, 5-1 Sanbona Warrior, 8-1 Regal Tiger, 10-1 Desert Legend, 14-1 Rhodes Runner, 16-1 Theheatison.

3.05 Tattersalls 40,000 Pound EBF 'Newcomers' 'Confined' Maiden Fillies' Stakes (2-Y-O: £20,616: 7f) (8)

1	(4)		**DANSE ROYALE** C Appleby 9-2	B Loughnane		--
2	(3)		**GODSPEED GIRL** A Balding 9-2	P J McDonald		--
3	(6)		**HARLEQUIN DREAM** J Chapple-Hyam 9-2	S De Sousa		--
4	(2)		**JUST SCARLET** (H) J Fanshawe 9-2	D Muscutt		--
5	(5)		**LEX VICTORIA** (T) S & E Crisford 9-2	D Probert		--
6	(7)		**RUBYROO** H Palmer 9-2	D Egan		--
7	(8)		**THI QAR** J & T Gosden 9-2	R Havlin		--
8	(1)		**WATCH PARTY** R Varian 9-2	R P Downey		--

9-4 Danse Royale, 9-2 Thi Qar, 5-1 Watch Party, Lex Victoria, 7-1 Godspeed Girl, 8-1 Rubyroo, 16-1 Just Scarlet, 20-1 Harlequin Dream.

3.40 William Hill Extra Place Races Daily Handicap (£12,885: 7f) (10)

1	(2)	5-3106	**ARCTIC DAWN** 14 (P,D) D & C Kubler 5-10-0	H Crouch		◆100
2	(10)	202-00	**MILITARY CODE** 28 (H) C Appleby 3-9-7	T Moore (7)		86
3	(3)	0-5540	**BETTY CLOVER** 52 E J-Houghton 4-9-7	C Bishop		97
4	(9)	000160	**MORTE POINT** 10 (B,D) W Muir & C Grassick 4-9-6	Ashley Lewis (3)		93
5	(5)	660642	**ANGEL HUNTER** 7 (B,D) R Hannon 4-9-4	P Dobbs		88
6	(1)	4-0030	**HUMAM** 10 (T,D) S C Williams 4-9-2	M Ghiani		87
7	(6)	2005-0	**KODI LION** 21 (D) M Appleby 5-9-1	A Rawlinson		80
8	(4)	0-0365	**SWORD** 14 (T,D) S C Williams 5-8-13	Olivia Haines (7)		85
9	(8)	1-30	**PINATUBO'S LEGACY** 28 (D) T Kent 4-8-13	D Egan		73
10	(7)	411-	**CASTLE ROCK** 281 (P,D) C Appleby 3-8-11	B Loughnane		88

7-4 Castle Rock, 4-1 Arctic Dawn, 9-2 Angel Hunter, 8-1 Military Code, 10-1 Sword, 14-1 Humam, 16-1 Kodi Lion, 20-1 Morte Point, Betty Clover, 25-1 Pinatubo's Legacy.

4.14 William Hill Best Odds Guaranteed Handicap (3-Y-O: £10,308: 1m) (7)

1	(5)	615-	**LOOKA** 343 (H) M Botti 9-11	S De Sousa		--
2	(1)	51-200	**MAN OF VISION** 30 (P) C Appleby 9-7	T Moore (7)		91
3	(4)	0-3210	**RUNSWICK** 9 (D) E Dunlop 9-6	B Loughnane		87
4	(3)	0-2000	**VINCENZO PERUGGIA** 9 C Johnston 9-6	David Egan		◆92
5	(7)	2-1510	**GO RIMBAUD** 9 (P,D) J & T Gosden 9-4	R Havlin		71
6	(2)	-52420	**LUZON HEIGHTS** 29 (P,D) W Knight 8-12	M Ghiani		82
7	(6)	4-011	**DRYMEE** 37 (D) J Fanshawe 8-10	Ashley Lewis (3)		77

11-8 Drymee, 9-2 Man Of Vision, 5-1 Looka, 6-1 Go Rimbaud, 8-1 Luzon Heights, 12-1 Runswick, 20-1 Vincenzo Peruggia.

4.50 Keep Your Raceday Positive Handicap
(£5,234: 5f) (6)

1	(5)	230231	**MERRIMACK** 7 (T,V,CD) S C Williams 5-9-12	C R Lyons (7)		70
2	(2)	300-43	**BRAVE NATION** 16 (D) M Attwater 6-9-11	B Loughnane		◆71
3	(1)	6400-6	**OUR PLANET** 14 (H,T,D) Michael Keady 4-9-8	D Muscutt		61
4	(4)	414211	**THORNABY PEARL** 8 (D) Adrian Nicholls 8-9-5	O Carmichael (7)		64
5	(3)	020404	**LION'S HOUSE** 26 (D) Miss L Perratt 5-9-4	P Bradley		65
6	(6)	1-6025	**LOLEETA** 87 (D) S C Williams 3-9-4	M Ghiani		61

6-4 Merrimack, 5-2 Thornaby Pearl, 5-1 Brave Nation, 7-1 Lion's House, 12-1 Our Planet, 14-1 Loleeta.

5.23 William Hill Price Boosts Apprentice Handicap (£5,234: 1m 6f) (6)

1	(3)	054241	**PRINCE QUATTRO** J21 (C,D) James Owen 7-10-2	M Paetel		◆69
2	(4)	246312	**JACK LANGLEY** 35 (BF) Charlie Clover 4-10-1	J Callan		68
3	(6)	0-0662	**BALTIC** 11 (B,T) L Wadham 6-10-1	Ashley Lewis		68
4	(5)	600612	**STITCHING WHEEL** 20 (T,D) C Grant 4-9-4	C Horgan (3)		56
5	(1)	23P-43	**DEREHAM** 43 (C,D) J Berry 10-9-1	Molly Keegan-Price (7)		56
6	(2)	060-02	**FRAM CASTLE** 17 (V) M Wigham 5-9-1	A Egan (5)		54

15-8 Prince Quattro, 2-1 Jack Langley, 6-1 Fram Castle, 7-1 Stitching Wheel, 10-1 Baltic, Dereham.

Sport

Gay shoulder injury adds to England woes

Cricket
Elizabeth Ammon

The England opener Emilio Gay injured his shoulder while batting for Durham yesterday to add to top-order concerns for the forthcoming Test series against Pakistan, with Jacob Bethell already ruled out with a knee injury.

Gay, who made his Test debut at the start of the summer and kept his place in the squad to face Pakistan this month, retired hurt while playing against Middlesex in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup match at Chester-le-Street.

The 26-year-old showed some discomfort in his right shoulder when facing Middlesex's Naavya Sharma early in the innings and immediately clutched at it after hitting Toby Roland-Jones for four with a drive down the ground at the start of the seventh over. After receiving treatment from the Durham physiotherapist, Gay left the field and opted to end his innings on nine runs from 17 balls.

Gay's early-season county form earned him a call-up to the Test squad for the series against New Zealand in June, replacing Zak Crawley. He scored half-centuries in each of the first two Tests, at Lord's and the Oval, before ending the series batting at No 6 at Trent Bridge after Ben Stokes promoted himself to open in his final innings after announcing his retirement.

Should he be ruled out for the first match of the Pakistan series, which starts at Headingley on August 19, England do not have a spare specialist opener in the 16-man squad they named on Thursday.

Ollie Pope was recalled to the Test squad as the spare batsman and to provide wicketkeeping cover but he has never opened and was mainly brought in as cover for the middle order.

One option is to promote Jordan Cox, who was brought in to replace the injured Bethell, to opener and return Pope to the No 3 slot where he batted before he was axed during the Ashes.

Surrey's Dan Lawrence is slated to bat at No 6 and provide some overs of spin. He has opened in Test cricket before — against Sri Lanka two years ago— but struggled and has not played Test cricket since then. It is unlikely England would want to put the pressure of opening and bowling on him.

England may, therefore, have to resort to calling up a 17th player to their squad. Somerset's James Rew made his debut during the second Test against New Zealand, when Stokes and Gus Atkinson were suspended, but failed to impress and is naturally more of a middle-order player. Ben McKinney, Gay's Durham team-mate, and Glamorgan's Asa Tribe have opened the batting for their counties and England Lions.

Another option would be to turn to a player that has been previously discarded, such as Surrey's Dom Sibley or Crawley. A return for the latter would be particularly surprising, given that Crawley announced he would take a short break from red-ball cricket after a tricky start to the season for Kent, but Sibley is the fourth-highest runscorer in Division One this season, averaging 57.50 and scoring three centuries.

Meanwhile, Andrew Flintoff has stepped down as the head coach of the England Lions after two years in charge to focus on his role as the coach of Sydney Thunder in the Big Bash League.

Mike Yardy, the former England white-ball all-rounder, will step in as head coach for the four-day Professional County Club Select XI match against a Pakistan XI, which begins at Beckenham on Wednesday 12 August.

Gay retired hurt against Middlesex, having scored nine runs from 17 balls

Redcar
Rob Wright

2.02 Yimmna **4.19** Ellie's De Vega
2.37 Here Comes Louie **4.57** Gemical
3.12 Illy's Roo **5.31** Bye Law
3.47 Spring Is Sprung

Going: good to firm, good in places
Draw: no advantage **Racing TV**

2.02 Maiden Stakes
(£5,400: 7f) (8)

1 (3) -0344 **WAR AND LOVE** 8 (P) B Ellison 4-9-8 **B Robinson**
2 (1) **KHANIMAMBO** D & N Barron 3-9-7 **D Nolan**
3 (7) 442 **RAGGAAS** 14 (T) S & E Crisford 3-9-7 **O Orr**
4 (6) 23 **VASTERN** 22 (BF) Adam Kirby 3-9-7 **T Eaves**
5 (2) 6 **BOWIE LASS** 10 N Tinkler 3-9-2 **A Jary (3)**
6 (5) 00060 **MAGIC LADY MAE** 7 L Mullaney 3-9-2 **D Keenan**
7 (4) **SUNTINO LADY** D & N Barron 3-9-2 **W Pyle**
8 (8) 02 **YIMMNA** 43 W Haggas 3-9-2 **C Fallon**

6-5 Yimmna, 11-4 Raggaas, 4-1 Vastern, 12-1 Khanimambo, 14-1 War And Love, 20-1 Suntino Lady, 33-1 Magic Lady Mae, 50-1 Bowie Lass.

2.37 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,140: 1m) (8)

1 (1) 5560 **ICE SHOW** 41 (H) D O'Meara 9-9 **M Winn**
2 (2) 00-5 **MISS POTOMAC** 151 K Ryan 9-9 **O Orr**
3 (5) -4246 **DALAMARA** 51 (D) B Haslam 9-9 **C Hardie**
4 (8) 46403 **SAXON GRACE** 7 D Bourke 9-6 **S Gray**
5 (7) -0665 **ITSZABOY** 5 N Tinkler 9-6 **A Jary (3)**
6 (4) -0622 **HERE COMES LOUIE** 2 Roger Fell 9-5 **Joanna Mason**
7 (6) 60021 **PARK LANE PENNY** 23 (D) I Furtado 9-5 **T Eaves**
8 (3) 54240 **DIAMOND AURA** 12 (P) T Easterby 9-0 **D Allan**

3-1 Park Lane Penny, 7-2 Saxon Grace, 4-1 Here Comes Louie, 7-1 Dalamara, 8-1 Miss Potomac, Diamond Aura, 10-1 Ice Show, 16-1 Itszaboy.

3.12 Handicap (£5,234: 1m) (14)

1 (1) 00114 **GORGEOUS MR GEORGE** 24 (D) D Cunha 4-10-4 **Taryn Langley (5)**
2 (12) 32300 **FRANKIES DREAM** 14 (H) J Candlish 4-10-2 **S D Bowen**
3 (10) 00061 **CAPITAL GUARANTEE** 23 (D) D O'Meara 6-10-1 **M Winn**
4 (5) 5-102 **PALADIN** 29 (CD) K Frost 5-10-1 **W Pyle**
5 (11) 00522 **MR MISTOFFELEES** 14 (P,D) S England 6-9-12 **J England**
6 (14) 24000 **HARRY THE ROGUE** 43 (V,D) S Hanlon 5-9-12 **T Eaves**
7 (13) 42125 **AMIDST THE CHAOS** 20 (P,BF,D) N Tinkler 4-9-11 **A Jary (3)**
8 (7) 44064 **NYMAN** 20 Roger Fell 4-9-9 **C Fallon**
9 (6) 12241 **WELBURY** 32 (P,D) E Bethell 3-9-8 **O Orr**
10 (3) 00015 **ILLY'S ROO** 15 (D) G Tutty 3-9-7 **Joanna Mason**
11 (2) 016-0 **SEA THE POWER** 91 (D) S Spencer 3-9-6 **D Swift**
12 (4) 32333 **BARLEY** 14 (P,D) T Easterby 7-9-5 **D Allan**
13 (8) 0-060 **CHESNEYS CHARM** 104 (W) I Furtado 4-9-4 **D Keenan**
14 (9) 05302 **VINCE LE PRINCE** 17 (P,T,BF,C) T Easterby 6-9-2 **D Fentiman**

9-2 Welbury, 13-2 Paladin, 7-1 Gorgeous Mr George, Frankies Dream, Capital Guarantee, 15-2 Mr Mistoffelees, Barley, 10-1 Amidst The Chaos.

3.47 Handicap (£8,100: 5f) (5)

1 (1) 00604 **DEMOCRACY DILEMMA** 11 (V,D) R Cowell 6-10-0 **T Eaves**
2 (3) 04320 **SPRING IS SPRUNG** 11 (D) P Midgley 7-9-3 **D Nolan**
3 (5) 12560 **FIDELIUS** 43 (D) N Tinkler 5-9-3 **A Jary (3)**
4 (4) 15640 **ROSENPUR** 14 (H,D) J Candlish 6-9-0 **D Keenan**
5 (2) 60022 **SPORTS COACH** 14 (D) A Brittain 5-8-10 **C Hardie**

11-10 Democracy Dilemma, 11-4 Spring Is Sprung, 7-2 Sports Coach, 12-1 Fidelius, Rosenpur.

4.19 Classified Stakes
(£3,140: 5f) (8)

1 (3) 0-623 **BRAVE BOB** 33 (P) J Camacho 4-9-9 **C Hardie**
2 (8) 06-03 **BUST A MOON** 8 (H,D) D Shaw 4-9-9 **D Keenan**
3 (1) 04423 **DORALEE** 4 (BF,CD) D & N Barron 5-9-9 **D Nolan**
4 (4) 00003 **LET'S GO HUGO** 14 (D) O Pears 6-9-9 **H Russell**
5 (2) -6624 **PINPOINT** 25 (D) Suzzanne France 5-9-9 **T Kielty-Marshall (5)**
6 (5) 64000 **UP THE MONK** 38 (P) M Appleby 4-9-9 **T Eaves**
7 (7) 43352 **ELLIE'S DE VEGA** 14 (B,BF) P Kirby 3-9-6 **C Fallon**
8 (6) 46002 **GWEN TENNYSON** 4 G Tutty 3-9-6 **W Pyle**

11-4 Doralee, 7-2 Ellie's De Vega, 4-1 Gwen Tennyson, 11-2 Let's Go Hugo, 13-2 Pinpoint, 10-1 Brave Bob, 14-1 Bust A Moon, 25-1 Up The Monk.

4.57 Handicap (£3,140: 1m 6f) (10)

1 (9) /321- **BUXTED REEL** J32 (D) T Lacey 7-10-2 **D Keenan**
2 (3) 00/54 **NEWPORT** 15 (B) I Jardine 6-10-0 **O Orr**
3 (7) 00310 **NANNY PARK** 15 Sara Ender 4-9-13 **R Sexton**
4 (8) -3266 **SARATOGA GOLD** 35 (P,D) K Frost 8-9-13 **W Pyle**
5 (2) 236-0 **SPOOKY WOOKY** 34 (T,V) S G West 4-9-11 **A Elliott**
6 (10) 43461 **BILLY BATHGATE** 20 (CD) Ewan Whillans 10-9-8 **D Nolan**
7 (1) -2612 **DUBAI VENTURE** 15 Miss T Jackson 5-9-8 **Joanna Mason**
8 (6) 664-5 **TIME TWISTER** 16 M & D Easterby 3-8-9 **L Chalkley (7)**
9 (5) -5430 **GEMICAL** 58 (H,V) R Menzies 3-8-7 **Amie Waugh (3)**
10 (4) 05500 **GALISTRA** 16 A Brown 3-8-5 **T Kielty-Marshall (5)**

100-30 Newport, 7-2 Buxted Reel, 5-1 Billy Bathgate, Nanny Park, 6-1 Dubai Venture, 8-1 Time Twister, 12-1 Saratoga Gold, 20-1 Spooky Wooky.

5.31 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,664: 6f) (7)

1 (5) 42461 **FRENCH AFFAIR** 10 (D) J Candlish 9-13 **S D Bowen**
2 (7) 30230 **SPACE BEAR** 15 (D) M Appleby 9-9 **C Fallon**
3 (1) 61352 **MASABAN** 31 (BF) E Bethell 9-3 **O Orr**
4 (3) 4-000 **BLEEP TEST** 14 (B,CD) T Easterby 9-2 **D Allan**
5 (6) 02032 **BRAVE TRAVELLER** 8 (D) B Smart 9-1 **C Hardie**
6 (2) 60330 **BYE LAW** 42 (P,CD) T Easterby 9-1 **D Fentiman**
7 (4) 10001 **HOUNDHILL** 8 (V) N Tinkler 9-0 **A Jary (3)**

5-2 French Affair, 7-2 Masaban, 9-2 Houndhill, 5-1 Brave Traveller, 6-1 Bye Law, 15-2 Space Bear, 25-1 Bleep Test.

Ayr
Rob Wright

5.27 Roman Crystal **7.30** Taaklam
6.00 Supremissy **8.00** Ubetterseethis
6.30 Unchartedterritory **8.30** Flying Moonlight
7.00 Jannas Journey

Going: good, good to soft in places
Draw: no advantage **Racing TV**

5.27 Maiden Stakes
(2-Y-O: £4,187: 6f) (10)

1 (8) 53 **BEECHWOOD GLORY** 15 J Butler 9-7 **MP Sheehy**
2 (6) 4 **COUL BLUE** 8 M Dods 9-7 **L Edmunds**
3 (7) 66 **FLASHING STAR** 42 (H) M Walford 9-7 **J Hart**
4 (2) **LONE STRIKER** Phillip Makin 9-7 **S James**
5 (5) 026 **MICK'S THE BOY** 24 (BF) M & D Easterby 9-7 **J Dickson (5)**
6 (9) 30635 **PONTE CARLO** 37 (P) T Easterby 9-7 **S B Kirrane**
7 (1) **REDROSECASTANA** C Kellett 9-7 **P Mulrennan**
8 (4) 06 **UNBEATABLE FAME** 7 R & P Fahey 9-7 **J Garritty**
9 (10) 444 **BLACK CUILLIN** 32 Craig Lidster 9-2 **A Mullen**
10 (3) 6543 **ROMAN CRYSTAL** 15 M & D Easterby 9-2 **B Garritty**

5-2 Beechwood Glory, 7-2 Mick's The Boy, 9-2 Roman Crystal, 5-1 Ponte Carlo, 8-1 Black Cuillin, 12-1 Flashing Star, 16-1 Lone Striker, Coul Blue.

6.00 Handicap (£4,187: 5f) (13)

1 (1) 51303 **HI LORD** 26 (D) Mr W G Harrison 4-10-0 **B McHugh**
2 (6) 5-011 **KING OF THE JUNGLE** 49 (CD) M & D Easterby 6-9-13 **B Garritty**
3 (7) 60304 **HARB** 7 (CD) T Davidson 7-9-10 **Lexie Clarkson (7)**
4 (4) 55365 **WATER OF LEITH** 12 (CD) J Goldie 8-9-9 **P Mulrennan**
5 (13) 32242 **STARTLING** 12 (B,BF,D) J Wainwright 4-9-9 **J Hart**
6 (10) 03444 **MIDNIGHT LIR** 15 (B,T,D) M Dods 5-9-8 **S B Kirrane**
7 (11) 04063 **SOUTH PARADE** 8 (BF,D) R & P Fahey 5-9-7 **E Tindall (5)**
8 (5) 05223 **HARRY MOLE** 14 Steph Hollinshead 4-9-6 **D Costello**
9 (9) -2540 **KEEP THE GOLD** 33 (P,BF) M Dods 4-9-4 **L Edmunds**
10 (12) 40060 **FALCON QUEEN** 12 (H) R M Smith 3-9-3 **JP Sullivan**
11 (2) 01-031 **SUPREMISSY** 47 (D) I Jardine 3-9-2 **A Mullen**
12 (3) 00565 **ROYAL DUKE** 12 (P,CD) R M Smith 5-8-9 **S Farmer (5)**
13 (8) 50026 **SUMMERSTORMS DREAM** 12 J Goldie 4-8-9 **Lauren Young (5)**

5-1 King Of The Jungle, 6-1 Harry Mole, 13-2 Startling, 7-1 Midnight Lir, 8-1 Hi Lord, South Parade, 10-1 Water Of Leith, Harb.

6.30 Handicap (£4,187: 1m 2f) (14)

1 (8) -6421 **TIGER** 6 (D) I Williams 4-10-7(5ex) **R Kavanagh (3)**
2 (13) /0623 **MR LINCOLN** J21 I Jardine 6-10-2 **A Mullen**
3 (6) 35300 **DRAUPNIR** 14 M & D Easterby 4-9-11 **B Garritty**
4 (1) 24223 **GEO** 12 (P,C) J Goldie 4-9-11 **P Mulrennan**
5 (5) -0234 **POL ROGER** 26 (P,CD) M Dods 6-9-10 **S B Kirrane**
6 (10) 03202 **DRYBURGH** 64 (H) Oli Rix 3-9-8 **S James**
7 (7) -4031 **UNCHARTEDTERRITORY** 60 D O'Meara 3-9-7 **L Edmunds**
8 (9) 4-031 **FAEBERON** 41 (P) S & E Crisford 3-9-6 **D Costello**
9 (14) 34106 **MAYOR OF MAGHERA** 12 (P) R M Smith 4-9-3 **JP Sullivan**
10 (4) -4000 **NATZOR** 10 (P,D) Lizzie Quinlan 6-9-1 **B McHugh**
11 (2) 23521 **PHANTOM SHADOW** 19 (CD) Ewan Whillans 3-9-1 **J Hart**
12 (12) 006 **PATH TO PEACE** 38 (B,T) K Scott 3-9-0 **G Fairley**
13 (3) 41334 **ANNANDALE** 26 (BF,C,D) J Goldie 8-8-13 **Doubtful**
14 (11) -6034 **IBN ALTHEEB** 28 (B) I Jardine 3-8-13 **J Nicholls (3)**

11-4 Tiger, 6-1 Unchartedterritory, Phantom Shadow, 13-2 Dryburgh, 7-1 Faeberon, 10-1 Mr Lincoln, 12-1 Geo, 16-1 Pol Roger.

7.00 Handicap (£5,234: 1m) (10)

1 (10) 05450 **THEORYOFEVERYTHING** 34 (T,CD) D O'Meara 6-9-11 **J Hart**
2 (4) 10005 **WALSINGHAM** 8 (D) D O'Meara 6-9-9 **B Garritty**
3 (7) -5000 **BRAVAIS** 92 (P) I Williams 6-9-9 **R Kavanagh (3)**
4 (3) 1-010 **MILTEYE** 50 (D) H Bethell 6-9-8 **E Tindall (5)**
5 (1) 32504 **BREAKDANCER** 12 (D) S & E Crisford 4-9-6 **P Mulrennan**
6 (2) -3010 **HIGH POINT** 7 I Jardine 5-9-4 **A Mullen**
7 (5) 22001 **HALE END** 19 (P,CD) M Dods 6-9-4 **L Edmunds**
8 (6) -0030 **COUNT PALATINE** 57 (C) M Dods 5-9-3 **S B Kirrane**
9 (9) 04014 **JANNAS JOURNEY** 23 (CD) J Goldie 5-9-3 **Lauren Young (5)**
10 (8) 11322 **MILITARY LEADER** 23 (B,D) Phillip Makin 5-8-11 **S James**

11-4 Hale End, 7-2 Military Leader, 6-1 Breakdancer, 13-2 Theoryofeverything, 7-1 Walsingham, 8-1 Jannas Journey, 14-1 Milteye, 16-1 High Point.

7.30 Handicap (£4,711: 6f) (13)

1 (8) 35231 **MR COOL** 12 (CD) C Johnston 4-10-3 **O Stammers**
2 (3) -4616 **ANNIE EDSON TAYLOR** 52 (B,T,D) Phillip Makin 5-9-13 **S James**
3 (5) 00636 **IMPRESSOR** 59 (P,CD) Phillip Makin 9-9-12 **L Edmunds**
4 (6) 50606 **KELPIE GREY** 12 (BF,C) J Goldie 6-9-11 **P Mulrennan**
5 (13) 22620 **THUNDERSTORM KATIE** 7 (CD) J Goldie 5-9-10 **Lauren Young (5)**
6 (7) -3250 **TAAKLAM** 8 (BF) H Bethell 3-9-8 **A Brookes**
7 (2) 5-430 **MASAJ ANGEL** 38 R & P Fahey 3-9-7 **J Garritty**
8 (11) 60033 **WHISKEY KISSES** 19 (BF) R M Smith 3-9-7 **G Fairley**
9 (4) 4500 **ELEMMA** 44 R & P Fahey 3-9-6 **B Garritty**
10 (1) 0-005 **HIGHFIELD SUNSHINE** 17 J & S Quinn 4-9-6 **J Hart**
11 (12) 02030 **UKIYO** 50 (D) A Kinirons (Ire) 5-9-2 **MP Sheehy**
12 (10) 34010 **DOON THE GLEN** 12 (V,D) J Goldie 6-9-0 **B McHugh**
13 (9) -2343 **LANARRA** 12 (D) R M Smith 3-8-8 **A Mullen**

3-1 Mr Cool, 6-1 Lanarra, 13-2 Whiskey Kisses, 8-1 Taaklam, 10-1 Ukiyo, Kelpie Grey, Annie Edson Taylor, 12-1 Thunderstorm Katie.

8.00 Handicap (£4,187: 7f) (13)

1 (1) 6-500 **HIGHFIELD VIKING** 55 (B,CD) J & S Quinn 6-10-0 **J Hart**
2 (10) 35132 **RUNNINSONOFAGUN** 12 (BF,C) T Davidson 4-9-13 **J Garritty**
3 (7) 44253 **BLACK STORM** 30 (B,BF,D) K Scott 5-9-13 **G Fairley**
4 (11) 31403 **PHOENIX OF DREAMS** 102 (H,BF,D) J & S Quinn 5-9-12 **D Costello**
5 (6) 01-00 **YY SPIRIT** 99 S Corbett 3-9-10 **Lexie Clarkson (7)**
6 (13) 10334 **SANAFI ZABEEL** 7 J Goldie 5-9-10 **P Mulrennan**
7 (8) -0021 **CIRCLE OF TRUST** 49 (B,CD) K Ryan 3-9-9 **L Edmunds**
8 (2) 3-304 **UBETTERSEETHIS** 57 (D) Craig Lidster 3-9-8 **S James**
9 (9) 0-420 **STOIC POET** 64 (H) I Jardine 3-9-8 **MP Sheehy**
10 (4) 22260 **MILFORD GRANGE** 14 M & D Easterby 3-9-7 **B Garritty**
11 (3) 40224 **SUPREME CLARETS** 14 R & P Fahey 3-9-5 **W Fentiman (3)**
12 (12) 50533 **YAASER** 7 (CD) J Goldie 8-9-4 **Lauren Young (5)**
13 (5) 46030 **TAP DANCER** 12 J Goldie 4-8-12 **A Mullen**

7-2 Runninsonofagun, 6-1 Ubetterseethis, Black Storm, 13-2 Circle Of Trust, 7-1 Yaaser, 8-1 Sanafi Zabeel, 12-1 Supreme Clarets, 14-1 others.

8.30 Classified Stakes
(£4,187: 1m 2f) (13)

1 (5) 00301 **WICKLOW WAY** 8 (D) M Walford 4-10-0 **J Garritty**
2 (3) 50622 **CHARENCEY** 11 (P,T) I Williams 6-9-9 **R Kavanagh (3)**
3 (7) 24220 **FALAISE BLANC** 8 (B,D) K Scott 4-9-9 **J Dickson (5)**
4 (1) 05365 **GOLDEN VALOUR** 12 (P,C) R M Smith 10-9-9 **JP Sullivan**
5 (11) 00-06 **ONE MORE BOTTLE** 12 (B,C) Lizzie Quinlan 5-9-9 **B McHugh**
6 (13) 50015 **PATRICK STREET** J15 (T,BF,D) A Kinirons (Ire) 7-9-9 **MP Sheehy**
7 (2) 40210 **SASSY GLORY** 14 (V,BF) M Walford 5-9-9 **J Hart**
8 (10) 00640 **STORM ON JURA** 33 J Goldie 4-9-9 **Lauren Young (5)**
9 (4) -0540 **ZEBRA STAR** 34 (CD) R M Smith 6-9-9 **S Farmer (5)**
10 (6) 00-33 **FLYING MOONLIGHT** 33 A M Thomson 3-9-1 **S B Kirrane**
11 (12) -0023 **RAISE THE STAKES** 43 (V,BF) Ewan Whillans 3-9-1 **G Fairley**
12 (9) 56360 **RESDEV TIME** 22 M & D Easterby 3-9-1 **B Garritty**
13 (8) 00600 **SANNY DOO** 34 J Goldie 3-9-1 **P Mulrennan**

15-8 Wicklow Way, 9-2 Charencey, 8-1 Patrick Street, Flying Moonlight, Raise The Stakes, 14-1 Sassy Glory, 16-1 Resdev Time, Golden Valour, Falaise Blanc.

Lingfield Park
Rob Wright

5.40 Make A Splash **7.10** Kanzi
6.10 Carefree Dream **7.40** Tattie Bogle
6.40 Halimede **8.10** Roman Spring

Going: standard
Draw: no advantage **Sky Sports Racing**

5.40 Handicap (£3,768: 2m) (10)

1 (1) 54-04 **TROOPER** 42 (B) N Mulholland 6-10-2 **F Marsh**
2 (6) -3122 **BALGOWAN** 40 (P,BF,CD) Seamus Mullins 7-10-1 **G Downing**
3 (2) -5044 **MAN OF THE SEA** 24 (T,V) N Mulholland 10-9-10 **Taylor Fisher**
4 (7) 60613 **SI WHITE** 9 (B,BF) Sir M Prescott 3-9-5 **L Morris**
5 (5) 0-052 **FEMME FATALE** 33 (H) J Tate 3-9-5 **G Wood**
6 (8) 64600 **SIR GRIFLET** 9 (P,T) D Cunha 3-9-1 **C Shepherd**
7 (3) 0003 **FABLED SPIRIT** 8 (P) A Watson 3-9-0 **G Mangan**
8 (9) -0053 **LAST FLIGHT** 32 James Horton 3-8-13 **J Peate**
9 (10) 600-5 **OCTOBER SURPRISE** 33 Miss S West 3-8-6 **T Heard**
10 (4) 060 **MAKE A SPLASH** 19 T Ward 3-8-5 **Georgia Dobie**

9-4 Si White, 5-2 Balgowan, 6-1 Femme Fatale, 13-2 Last Flight, 8-1 Fabled Spirit, 14-1 Man Of The Sea, 25-1 others.

6.10 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,397: 5f) (6)

1 (3) 52246 **CAREFREE DREAM** 15 (D) J S Moore 9-6 **Taylor Fisher**
2 (2) 40-32 **GUERNSEY LADY** 65 (D) P Evans 9-6 **J F Egan**
3 (6) 3-330 **ARCTIC WIND** 37 P Evans 9-5 **C Hutchinson**
4 (1) 00355 **WYLE COP** 21 (B) Jack Jones 9-5 **J Watson**
5 (5) 12250 **GO LOCKERS GO** 8 (D) M Bell 9-5 **R Coakley**
6 (4) -0411 **SUNLIT SEA** 15 (B,D) Sir M Prescott 9-4 **L Morris**

5-4 Sunlit Sea, 5-2 Guernsey Lady, 6-1 Carefree Dream, 15-2 Go Lockers Go, 12-1 Wyle Cop, 14-1 Arctic Wind.

6.40 Handicap (£3,768: 1m 5f) (7)

1 (3) 13515 **V POWER** 3 (T) T Faulkner 6-10-2 **Zoe Lewis (7)**
2 (5) 5002 **SHOPAHOLIC** 18 Jack Jones 4-10-2 **J Watson**
3 (6) 2-036 **ARTAVIAN** 33 (T,V) P Chamings 6-9-8 **J Leavy**
4 (2) 0001 **HALIMEDE** 4 Sir M Prescott 3-9-8(6ex) **L Morris**
5 (4) 645 **PARC DOSNE** 22 M Crawley 3-9-5 **K S McHugh (7)**
6 (7) 62224 **DARKEST RED** 30 J Boyle 3-9-4 **P Cosgrave**
7 (1) 15166 **COSPICUA** 58 J Tate 3-8-12 **G Wood**

6-4 Halimede, 11-4 Darkest Red, 4-1 Shopaholic, 10-1 V Power, 14-1 Parc Dosne, 16-1 Cospicua, Artavian.

7.10 Novice Stakes
(2-Y-O: £5,400: 1m) (7)

1 (5) 00 **AMETHYST STAR** 26 E J-Houghton 9-2 **C Hutchinson**
2 (3) 0 **CHAISE LONGUE** 30 E Dunlop 9-2 **J Watson**
3 (7) 2 **KANZI** 12 C Johnston 9-2 **C Shepherd**
4 (2) 0 **NORFOLK DREAM** 26 W Knight 9-2 **Taylor Fisher**
5 (4) **OZONE FRIENDLY** James Owen 9-2 **H Davies**
6 (6) **SAFFRON BAY** C Hills 9-2 **R Hornby**
7 (1) 0 **SENORITA LUNA** 18 M Botti 9-2 **B Sayette**

6-4 Kanzi, 3-1 Ozone Friendly, Saffron Bay, 14-1 Chaise Longue, Senorita Luna, Amethyst Star, 20-1 Norfolk Dream.

7.40 Handicap (£5,653: 7f) (7)

1 (6) 00432 **HUSCAL** 24 (T) C Hills 4-10-0 **J Watson**
2 (7) 16100 **PORT ROAD** 28 (CD) S Dow 5-9-11 **H Davies**
3 (3) 00550 **ROGUE SUPREMACY** 25 A Watson 3-9-9 **L Morris**
4 (2) 01226 **ARANTES NASCIMENTO** 28 (D) M Attwater 5-9-8 **B Sayette**
5 (1) 21202 **TATTIE BOGLE** 19 (P,D) C Johnston 4-9-7 **C Shepherd**
6 (4) 05540 **RED HAT EAGLE** 28 (P,C) W Knight 6-9-5 **Taylor Fisher**
7 (5) -4215 **BOLD SUITOR** 59 (CD) Craig Benton 9-9-4 **Georgia Dobie**

5-2 Huscal, 7-2 Tattie Bogle, 4-1 Arantes Nascimento, 6-1 Red Hat Eagle, 7-1 Bold Suitor, 8-1 Rogue Supremacy, 14-1 Port Road.

8.10 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 6f) (10)

1 (5) 21451 **A LOTT OF KANE** 9 (D) C Banham 3-9-11 **J Haynes**
2 (6) 16650 **DR ALI** 32 (V,D) J R Jenkins 4-9-9 **J Peate**
3 (8) 30605 **EDERGOLE'S GIFT** 17 (B,T,C,D) C Allen 5-9-9 **G Wood**
4 (1) 10000 **HENRY TUDOR** 25 (D) M Hoad 4-9-9 **L Morris**
5 (10) 64006 **HORUS** 60 (P,T,CD) M Attwater 4-9-9 **J Glennon (7)**
6 (3) 00456 **JUST KING HIGH** 40 (B,T) R Burdon 4-9-9 **C Shepherd**
7 (9) 00406 **RAINBOW SORBET** 25 (V) J & S Best 4-9-9 **F Marsh**
8 (2) 00304 **ROMAN SPRING** 18 (T,C,D) R Cook & J Bridger 6-9-9 **J Leavy**
9 (7) 60450 **MUSIC AND SONG** 19 D Flood 3-9-5 **J F Egan**
10 (4) 0-00 **PAINT YOUR PALETTE** 60 (T) J Osborne 3-9-5 **W Carver**

2-1 A Lott Of Kane, 9-2 Just King High, 7-1 Henry Tudor, Roman Spring, 8-1 Horus, 12-1 Edergole's Gift, Dr Ali, 14-1 others.

YESTERDAY'S RACING RESULTS

Brighton

Going: Good to Firm (good in places)

2.30 (5f 60yd) 1, **Diomed Spirit** (Charles Bishop, 2-1 fav); 2, Washington Heir (5-1); 3, Recon Mission (13-2). 7 ran. nk, 27½l. C Gordon.

3.00 (5f 215yd) 1, **Enamored** (David Probert, 8-11 fav); 2, Red Tail (3-1); 3, Little Mester (7-2). 5 ran. ½l, 2¼l. E A L Dunlop.

3.30 (1m 1f 207yd) 1, **Celebrating Ethel** (Myla Coppins, 3-1 fav); 2, Fitzmaurice (22-1); 3, Outrace (7-1). 6 ran. 2¼l, 1½l. A W Carroll.

4.00 (5f 215yd) 1, **Marcellinus** (Donagh Murphy, 7-2 fav); 2, The Quiet Gent (4-1); 3, Tenbob Tommy (11-1). 10 ran. 2l, hd. Tom Dascombe.

4.30 (5f 215yd) 1, **Big Time Rascal** (Benoit D L Sayetta, 9-1); 2, Manhattan Chute (12-1); 3, Dragon God (11-4). 7 ran. 1¼l, ¾l. S Hodgson.

5.00 (6f 210yd) 1, **Superstorm** (Mikkel Mortensen, 5-1); 2, Pennine Way (11-4); 3, Shes Got The Blues (7-4). 6 ran. NR: King Cherry. nk, 1½l. C Fellowes.

5.30 (1m) 1, **Anafah** (D C Costello, 6-4); 2, Fareedhat El Izz (5-4 fav); 3, Ghaya (14-1). 5 ran. 1l, 8½l. P Collington.

Placepot: £175.00 **Quadpot: £96.90**

Musselburgh

Going: Good

1.50 (1m 208yd) 1, **Samra Star** (P Mulrennan, 4-1); 2, Falcon Nine (11-4 fav); 3, Miners Gamble (5-1). 7 ran. 1½l, ¾l. Miss L A Perratt.

2.20 (5f 1yd) 1, **Minster Man** (P Mulrennan, 3-1); 2, Sod Hall Lane (20-1); 3, Faith In Florence (6-5 fav). 5 ran. 17¼l, 17½l. R M H Cowell.

2.50 (7f 15yd) 1, **Bella Lucia** (William Pyle, 13-2); 2, Bigalo (4-5 fav); 3, Amantha (4-1). 5 ran. 1¼l, 1½l. G Tutty.

3.20 (7f 15yd) 1, **Jonny Concrete** (Jack Nicholls, 100-30); 2, Ashen (8-1); 3, Vixey (16-1). 11 ran. 17¾l, nk. I Jardine.

3.50 (5f 1yd) 1, **Tiva** (D Tudhope, 4-1); 2, Woohoo (9-4); 3, Ecclefechan (33-1). 6 ran. nk, 2¼l. D O'Meara.

4.24 (1m 5f) 1, **Sure And Stedfast** (Greg Fairley, 8-1); 2, Roc De Fer (11-10); 3, Willow Wood (11-2). 6 ran. NR: Tommy's Promise. ¾l, 3l. Ewan Whillans.

4.54 (7f 15yd) 1, **Monhammer** (P Mulrennan, 6-4); 2, Keep Me Stable (5-1); 3, Misemerald (9-4). 5 ran. NR: Maui Breeze. 1l, ½l. Miss L A Perratt.

Placepot: £67.90 **Quadpot: £10.20**

Thirsk

Going: Good (good to firm in places)

2.10 (6f) 1, **Drish Samphire** (C Horgan, 50-1); 2, Golden Prosperity (11-1); 3, Mister Sky Blue (11-2). 9 ran. ½l, hd. L A Mullaney.

2.40 (5f) 1, **Prosperity Angel** (A Mullen, 33-1); 2, My Maria (15-8); 3, Inglewood (85-40). 11 ran. ¾l, sh. B Haslam.

3.10 (7f) 1, **Bymiddaytomorrow** (Ashley Lewis, 11-8); 2, Love Tanya (11-4); 3, Gerry's Darling (11-4). 6 ran. hd, 37½l. E Walker.

3.40 (5f) 1, **Azuinthejungle** (Alex Jary, 9-4 fav); 2, Vince L'Amour (10-1); 3, Qila (12-1). 6 ran. ½l, hd. N Tinkler.

4.10 (1m 4f 8yd) 1, **Master Vintner** (Edward Greatrex, 3-1); 2, Golden West (14-1); 3, Majestic (7-2). 6 ran. 2¾l, ¾l. R M Beckett.

4.40 (6f) 1, **Great Profit** (Barry McHugh, 7-2); 2, Yellow Diamonds (7-1); 3, Lope Y Linda (6-1). 10 ran. NR: Hellcat. 2¼l, nk. W G Harrison.

Placepot: £250.00
Quadpot: £25.10

Haydock Park

Going: Good (good to firm in places)

5.43 (1m 2f 42yd) 1, **Ancestor** (Tom Marquand, 8-15 fav); 2, Tropical Sands (13-8); 3, Golden Caviar (22-1). nk, 8l. W J Haggas.

6.18 (1m 6f) 1, **Edward Sexton** (Mr D H Dunsdon, 1-1); 2, Fast Fred (5-1); 3, Arrange (11-4). 7 ran. NR: Clansman. 2¼l, ½l. G & J Moore.

6.53 (5f) 1, **Dance A Jig** (H Crouch, 2-1); 2, Rotelle (10-1); 3, Casino Star (2-1). 5 ran. NR: God Given Talent. 2½l, ½l. R M Beckett.

7.28 (7f 212yd) 1, **Burning Up** (C Lee, 4-1); 2, Arthurian (6-4); 3, Skylar (14-1). 6 ran. 27½l, 1¼l. K R Burke.

8.03 (6f 212yd) 1, **Silver Sovereign** (H Crouch, 7-4); 2, Syndicale (11-10 fav); 3, Aphra Behn (13-2). 9 ran. ½l, 2¼l. C G Cox.

8.38 (6f 212yd) 1, **Montezin** (Harry Russell, 9-2); 2, Distinct Spirit (4-1); 3, Bajan Bandit (33-1). 11 ran. ½l, 1¼l. A Brittain.

Newmarket

Going: Good to Firm

5.27 (7f) 1, **Desert Castle** (Billy Loughnane, 1-2 fav); 2, Sommood (6-1); 3, Netherstream (12-1). 8 ran. 3½l, 17½l. C Appleby.

6.02 (1m) 1, **Zarakova** (Oisin Murphy, 6-4 fav); 2, Lily Pink (7-2); 3, Bint Palace Pier (7-1). 4 ran. nk, 17½l. A M Balding.

6.37 (6f) 1, **Nabati** (Billy Loughnane, 2-5 fav); 2, Tawakal (9-4); 3, Roll Up Raymond (80-1). 5 ran. hd, 5½l. C Appleby.

7.12 (6f) 1, **Fifty Nifty** (Cieren Fallon, 18-1); 2, Havana Blue (11-4 fav); 3, Spring Bloom (3-1). 10 ran. ½l. nk. Martin Dunne.

7.47 (7f) 1, **Rogue Citation** (Harry Davies, 15-2); 2, Show Me Gold (22-1); 3, Albeseeingyer (5-1). 4 ran. E Bethell.

8.22 (1m 2f) 1, **

‘Aussies ask, Are you related to that b****** Jardine?’

Family of controversial Bodyline skipper say that his name remains divisive to this day, **Ivo Tennant** writes

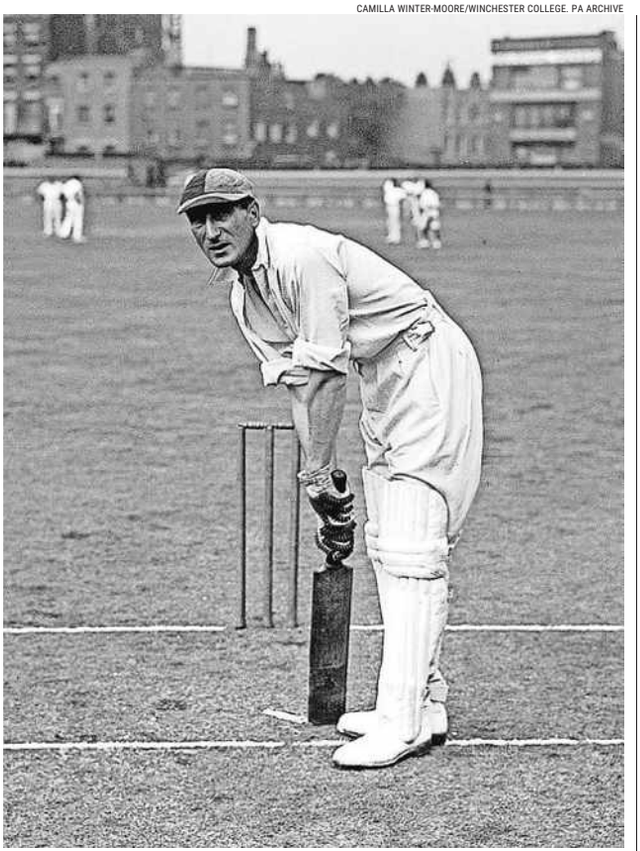
At Winchester College, which has nurtured politicians and sportsmen ranging from Hugh Gaitskell and Rishi Sunak to Max Woosnam and Claude Ashton, the 1st XI cricket ground is suitably grandiose. Beyond one boundary is the River Itchen, behind the arm is the cathedral and over extra cover is a renowned coaching inn, named after the founder of the school. On William of Wykeham Day last weekend two of its most famous old boys, one princely, the other polarising, were honoured.

The central event after commemorating the founder in the 14th century chapel was the unveiling of two plaques in the pavilion. One recognises Nawab of Pataudi, a fine batsman and captain of India in the 1960s and 1970s. The other honours the aloof Scot who made his debut for England nearly 100 years ago, shortly before his implementation of bodyline bowling, which won the Ashes for England and was said to have almost lost an empire. His alma mater, which also displayed his old writing box, describes him as “in many respects England’s first professional captain”. In contrast, Australians recoil to this day when they meet descendants of Douglas Jardine.

“Douglas’s four children have either died or disappeared,” said Andrew Jardine, who with his sister, Harriet (now Palmer) was representing the family at the ceremony. They are second cousins once removed and were both born before his death in 1958, aged only 57, but were too young to have known him. Nonetheless, once introductions are made and the surname and link revealed, the family become fair game for Australians.

“The first question I am asked is whether I am part of Jardine-Matheson [the multinational investment and holding company],” Andrew said. “The second is: ‘You’re not related to that bastard?’ Some say this with a twinkle in their eye, some don’t. If they are rational, I try to give a balanced view of Douglas. If they are bigoted I don’t continue with the conversation. I have never been to Australia but have nothing against Australians.

CAMILLA WINTER-MOORE/WINCHESTER COLLEGE. PA ARCHIVE



Andrew Jardine and sister Harriet, represented the family of Douglas Jardine, above, at the unveiling of a plaque in his memory at Winchester last weekend

“His biographers, Christopher Douglas and Mark Peel, were balanced, although Peel was critical initially. Douglas Jardine had a very austere upbringing and education – he was a product of his time and of public schools in that period. The Australian crowds were unpleasant to him on his first visit in 1928 and he gave as good as he got, whereas the Indians were not really aggressive towards him.” The name was a handicap in another sense as well. “At prep school it was assumed I was a competent cricketer. The same was the case when I went to Charterhouse.” Although Andrew did not go on to have a career in first-class cricket, he did play for the school, as a batsman, for three years.

How would Jardine have coped with captaining England nowadays? “As a commanding army officer, he would have had that distance between himself and his team,” he said. “He wouldn’t have been in nightclubs. It was a bit bizarre that Ben Stokes was on the panel setting the rules [over curfews] and then was the first person to break them [after the Lord’s Test against New Zealand in June],” said Andrew, who became a fellow and the bursar of Worcester College at the University of Oxford.

Both Jardine and Pataudi went on to Oxford after leaving Winchester, the latter having created a record by surpassing the former’s runs tally in a single term (1,068 to 997). All was sweetness and light between the two families at the unveiling and yet there had been controversy in the past.

“My grandfather [Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan Pataudi] played with Jardine and went on his tour to Australia,” said Pataudi’s son, Saif Ali Khan, at his old school for the ceremony. “My father said my grandfather was a conscientious objector to bodyline,

but any captain who had fast bowlers, as Jardine possessed and West Indies did later, would have used them.”

Iftikhar Ali Khan refused to move into the close fielding positions required for bodyline and was dropped by the captain.

Saif, who played at Lord’s while at Winchester — “there was a certain expectation when I went out to bat” — became a leading actor and a producer in India’s “Bollywood”. He has yet to be cast, or to cast himself, as a cricketer but he is intent on making a film about his father. “The difficulty is finding someone who can both act and play cricket properly.”

What would “Tiger” Pataudi have done if his teams had over-indulged themselves? “My father was a very kind man and he enjoyed a drink. The heroes from his time could be found in bars. There is too much pressure on captains and players today — people are too judgmental and harsh.”

RESULTS

Cricket

The Hundred
Birmingham Phoenix v Sunrisers Leeds
Men

Edgbaston (Birmingham Phoenix won toss)

Sunrisers Leeds	(balls)	
M Marsh b Tariq	34	(23)
†R Rickelton †un out	65	(37)
H Brook lbw b Tariq	19	(11)
*Z Crawley c Owen b Thompson	3	(5)
D Lawrence c Smeed b Wood	14	(12)
M Revis run out	6	(2)
L Patterson-White not out	10	(6)
B Carse c Ahmed b Helm	0	(2)
M Potts not out	8	(3)
Extras (b 1, lb 1, nb 1, w 7)	10	
Total (7 wkts, 100 balls)	**169**	

N Ellis and A Ahmed did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-52, 2-94, 3-107, 4-139, 5-145, 6-154, 7-154;

Bowling Wood 15-7-30-1; Helm 20-8-25-1; Currie 10-3-20-0; Ahmed 15-5-26-0; Tariq 20-8-28-2; Thompson 20-3-38-1.

Birmingham Phoenix	(balls)	
M Owen c Ahmed b Carse	12	(10)
W Smeed c Rickelton b Potts	9	(6)
†J Clarke not out	17	(15)
R Ahmed c Revis b Cars	0	(2)
S Dickson not out	14	(14)
Extras (lb 2, w 1)	3	
Total (3 wkts, 47 balls)	**55**	

T Helm, *D Ferreira, J Thompson, S Currie, C Wood, and U Tariq to bat.

Fall of wickets 1-12, 2-22, 3-23.

Bowling Carse 15-10-15-2; Ahmed 10-5-8-0; Potts 10-4-17-1; Patterson-White 5-1-4-0; Ellis 5-2-8-0; Revis 1-0-1-0.

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Trent Rockets	6	5	1	0	0	**20**	0.90
MI London	6	4	2	0	0	**16**	0.45
Welsh Fire	6	4	2	0	0	**16**	-0.54
Manchester SG	6	3	3	0	0	**12**	0.49
Leeds Sunrisers	5	3	2	0	0	**12**	0.35
Southern Brave	6	2	4	0	0	**8**	0.02
London Spirit	6	1	5	0	0	**4**	-0.49
B’ham Phoenix	5	1	4	0	0	**4**	-1.29

**does not include last night’s match*

Women

Edgbaston (Sunrisers Leeds won toss): Sunrisers Leeds (4pts) beat Birmingham Phoenix by nine wickets

Birmingham Phoenix	(balls)	
D S T Perrin c Smith b McCarthy	0	(6)
T T Beaumont b Cross	4	(6)
A R Capsey c and b Cross	6	(6)
*E A Perry c Litchfield b Jonassen	31	(22)
E L Lamb run out	47	(34)
A Dercksen c Sutherland b Sharma	7	(12)
†J E M Spence c Gibson b Sutherland	1	(4)
F S Khan lbw b Sharma	1	(3)
A M King c Winfield-Hill b Sharma	2	(4)
L C N Smith not out	2	(3)
L L Filer not out	1	(1)
Extras (lb 1, w 3, nb 1)	5	
Total (9 wkts, 100 balls)	**107**	

Fall of wickets 1-0, 2-9, 3-26, 4-55, 5-89, 6-100, 7-101, 8-103, 9-105.

Bowling McCarthy 15-8-21-1; Cross 15-7-14-2; Jonassen 15-7-15-1; Sutherland 20-8-19-1; Baker 15-6-20-0; Gibson 5-2-6-0; Sharma 15-6-11-3.

SunRisers Leeds	(balls)	
B F Smith c King b Khan	12	(9)
P E S Litchfield not out	71	(33)
†L Winfield-Hill not out	26	(27)
Extras (b 1, w 1)	2	
Total (1 wkt, 69 balls)	**111**	

J L Jonassen, A J Sutherland, *D R Gibson, D B Sharma, D E M Carter, K L Cross, C M McCarthy and H L Baker did not bat.

Fall of wicket 1-24.

Bowling Khan 15-6-25-1; Filer 15-5-23-0; Smith 10-4-21-0; Capsey 10-2-17-0; Perry 5-1-13-0; King 14-7-11-0.

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Trent Rockets	6	5	1	0	0	**20**	1.60
Southern Brave	6	5	1	0	0	**20**	0.40
Manchester SG	6	3	2	0	1	**14**	0.61
Leeds Sunrisers	6	3	3	0	0	**12**	0.67
Welsh Fire	6	3	3	0	0	**12**	0.34
London Spirit	6	1	4	1	0	**6**	-0.64
MI London	6	1	4	1	0	**6**	-1.23
B’ham Phoenix	6	1	4	0	1	**6**	-2.09

Metro Bank Cup: Group A: Old Trafford Gloucestershire 270-6; Lancashire 273-6. *Lancashire (4pts) won by four wickets.* **Leicester** Warwickshire 220; Leicestershire. **Chesterfield** Northamptonshire 259-8; Nottinghamshire 261-4. *Nottinghamshire (4pts) won by six wickets*. **Taunton** Somerset 368-9 (T Lammonby 114); Surrey 180. *Somerset (4pts) won by 188 run.*

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Leicestershire	6	4	2	0	0	**16**	0.68
Surrey	6	4	2	0	0	**16**	0.37
Nottinghamshire	5	3	2	0	0	**12**	0.17
Lancashire	5	3	2	0	0	**12**	-0.07
Kent	6	3	3	0	0	**12**	-0.57
Somerset	5	2	3	0	0	**8**	-0.18
Warkwickshire	5	2	3	0	0	**8**	-0.19
Northants	5	2	3	0	0	**8**	-0.19
Gloucs	5	1	4	0	0	**4**	-0.15

**does not include yesterday’s matches*

Group B: Chester-le-Street Durham 303-7 (A Lees 103); Middlesex. **Sophia Gardens** Essex 312 (L Benkenstein 140); Glamorgan 309-7 (T van der Gugten 118no). *Essex (4pts) won by three runs*. **Hove** Sussex 333-9; Worcestershire. **Scarborough** Derbyshire 278-8; Yorkshire 281-5. *Yorkshire (4pts) won by five wickets.*

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Middlesex	5	4	1	0	0	**16**	1.85
Yorkshire	6	4	2	0	0	**16**	0.69
Durham	5	4	1	0	0	**16**	0.41
Hampshire	6	3	3	0	0	**12**	-0.25
Worcestershire	5	3	2	0	0	**12**	-0.30
Derbyshire	5	2	3	0	0	**8**	0.62
Essex	5	2	3	0	0	**8**	0.20
Glamorgan	6	1	5	0	0	**4**	-1.23
Sussex	5	1	4	0	0	**2**	-1.81

**does not include yesterday’s matches*

Cycling

Tour of Poland

Leading positions: Stage 5 (Opole to Kocierz Resort, 218.5km): 1, J Christen (Switz, UAE Team Emirates-XRG) 4hr 56min 29sec; 2, M Brenner (Ger, Tudor Pro Cycling) same time; 3, L Barré (Fr, Visma-Lease a Bike) at 4sec behind. **Overall** 1, B Lemmen (Neth, Visma-Lease a Bike) 21:09:49; 2, C Scaroni (It, XDS Astana) at 6sec; 3, Brenner 15.

Golf

US PGA Tour Wyndham Championship

Greensboro, North Carolina: Leading first-round scores (United States unless stated): **61** B Hossler. **62** B James, S Theegala. **64** M Schmid (Ger), D McCarthy, D Thompson, H Springer, D Ghim, Z Bauchou.

Women’s PIF London Championship

Centurion Club, Hertfordshire: Leaders after two rounds (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): **135** A Huang (Can) 67, 68. **136** C Hull 74, 62. **138** L Hall 71, 67. **139** A Donegan 70, 69; K Bennett (Aus) 68, 71. **140** A van Dam (Neth) 72, 68; A Hewson 74, 66; S Tan (Sing) 70, 70.

Tennis

ATP National Bank Open

Montreal: Third round R Jodar (Sp) bt L Musetti (It) 6-4, 6-3; A Rinderknech (Fr) bt F Tiafoe (US) 6-2, 2-0 ret; B Nakashima (US) bt T Droguet (Fr) 4-6, 6-2, 7-5; D Merida (Sp) bt A Michelsen (US) 6-4, 6-7 (4-7), 6-1; T Griekspoor (Neth) bt M Arnaldi (It) 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

WTA National Bank Open

Toronto: Third round A Sabalenka (Bela) bt Z Shuai (China) 6-3, 6-4; E Svitolina (Ukr) bt A Potapova (Russ) 6-1, 6-1; A Korneeva (Russ) bt I Jovic (US) 6-3, 6-4; E Rybakina (Kaz bt A Li (US) 6-2, 7-5.

FIXTURES

Today

Football

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

Carabao Cup: First round AFC Wimbledon v Newport County; Barnsley v Wigan; Bradford City v Rochdale; Bristol Rovers v Peterborough; Bromley v Reading; Burnley v Notts County; Burton Albion v Blackburn; Cambridge Utd v Barnet (1.0); Cardiff v Swindon; Cheltenham v Charlton (5.30); Colchester v Southampton (5.30); Crewe v Accrington; Derby v Lincoln City; Fleetwood v Chesterfield; Gillingham v Luton; Grimsby v Blackpool; Leicester v Northampton; Leyton Orient v Oxford Utd; Norwich v Milton Keynes Dons; Preston v Huddersfield; Queens Park Rangers v Millwall (2.0); Rotherham v West Bromwich (5.30); Salford v Shrewsbury; Sheffield Wednesday v Bolton; Stockport County v Doncaster; Stoke v Oldham; Swansea v Birmingham; West Ham v Portsmouth; Watford v Crawley.

Vanarama National League AFC Fylde v Wealdstone; Altrincham v Southend Utd; Boreham Wood v Tamworth; Boston v Aldershot; Carlisle v Worthing; Eastleigh v Gateshead; Forest Green v Halifax; Harrogate v Solihull Moors; Hartlepool v Barrow; Hornchurch v Kidderminster; Scunthorpe v Yeovil; Woking v Sutton Utd. **North** AFC Telford v Brackley; Buxton v Hereford; Chorley v Chester; Darlington v Worksop; Hebburn v Southport; King’s Lynn v Harborough; Marine v Macclesfield; Merthyr Town v Hednesford; Morecambe v Spennymoor; Oxford City v Bedford; Radcliffe v Spalding; Scarborough v South Shields. **South** Billericay v Dover; Braintree v Tonbridge; Dorking v Dagenham & Redbridge; Farnham v AFC Totton; Folkestone Invicta v Walton & Hersham; Hemel Hempstead v Chelmsford; Maidstone v Farnborough; Salisbury v Hampton & Richmond; Slough v Ebbsfleet; Torquay v Horsham; Truro v Maidenhead; Weston-super-Mare v Chesham.

William Hill Scottish Premiership Dundee v Aberdeen; St Mirren v St Johnstone.

William Hill Championship Arbroath v Inverness Caledonian Thistle; Dunfermline v Ayr; Queen’s Park v Raith; Stenhousemuir v Morton. **League One** Airdrieonians v East Kilbride; East Fife v Cove Rangers; Hamilton v Alloa; Queen of the South v Peterhead; Ross County v Montrose. **League Two** Dumbarton v Clyde; Elgin v Forfar; Kelty Hearts v Stirling Albion; Spartans v Edinburgh City; Stranraer v Annan.

Cricket

The Hundred: Kia Oval MI London v Trent Rockets (women 11.0, men 2.30). **Utilita Bowl** Southern Brave v Manchester Super Giants (women 2.30, men 6.0).

Golf

Centurion Club, Hertfordshire Women’s European Tour PIF London Championship.

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Bradford Bulls v Warrington Wolves (3.0); Huddersfield Giants v Catalans Dragons (2.0); Wigan Warriors v Toulouse (5.30).

Betfred Championship Salford v Swinton Lions (2.30).

Tomorrow

Football

Carabao Cup: First round Mansfield v Sheffield Utd (4.0).

William Hill Scottish Premiership Heart of Midlothian v Dundee Utd (3.0); Kilmarnock v Celtic (1.30); Motherwell v Falkirk (3.0); Rangers v Hibernian (4.0).

Cricket

The Hundred: Headingley Sunrisers Leeds v Welsh Fire (women 11.0, men 2.30). **Lord’s** London Spirit v Birmingham Phoenix (women 2.30, men 6.0).

Metro Bank Cup (11.0): **Group A: Cheltenham** Gloucestershire v Nottinghamshire. **Beckenham** Kent v Leicestershire. **Northampton** Northamptonshire v Somerset. **Rugby** Warwickshire v Lancashire. **Group B: Derby** Derbyshire v Middlesex. **Darlington** Durham v Essex. **Sophia Gardens** Glamorgan v Worcestershire. **Hove** Sussex v Hampshire.

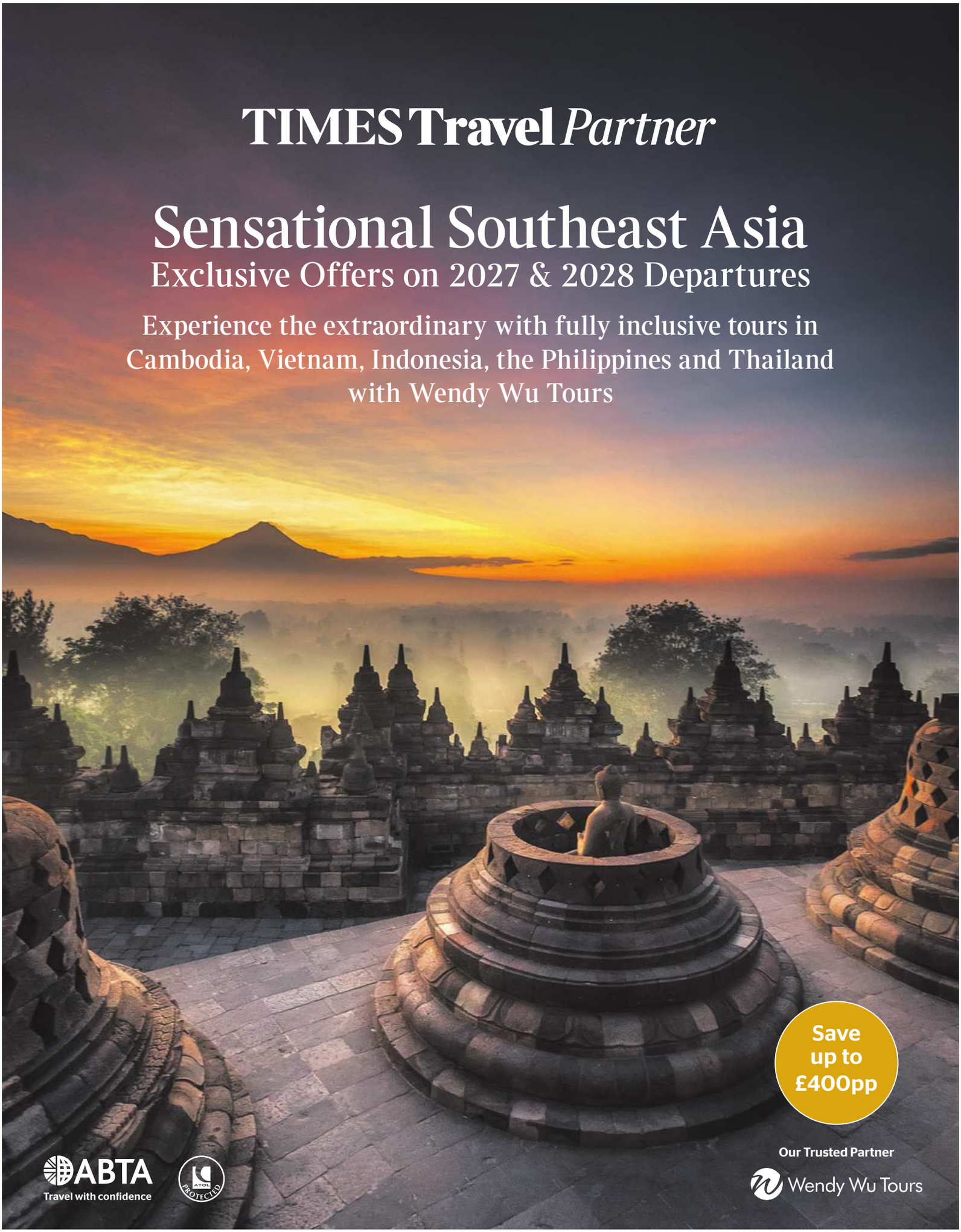
Golf

Centurion Club, Hertfordshire Women’s European Tour PIF London Championship.

Rugby league

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

Betfred Championship Batley Bulldogs v Newcastle Thunder; Halifax Panthers v Barrow Raiders; Hunslet v Keighley Cougars; London Broncos v Goole Vikings; Midlands Hurricanes v Workington Town (2.0); North Wales Crusaders v Doncaster; Oldham v Sheffield Eagles; Rochdale Hornets v Whitehaven.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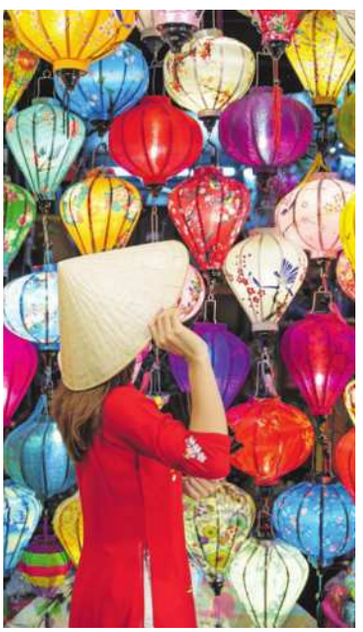

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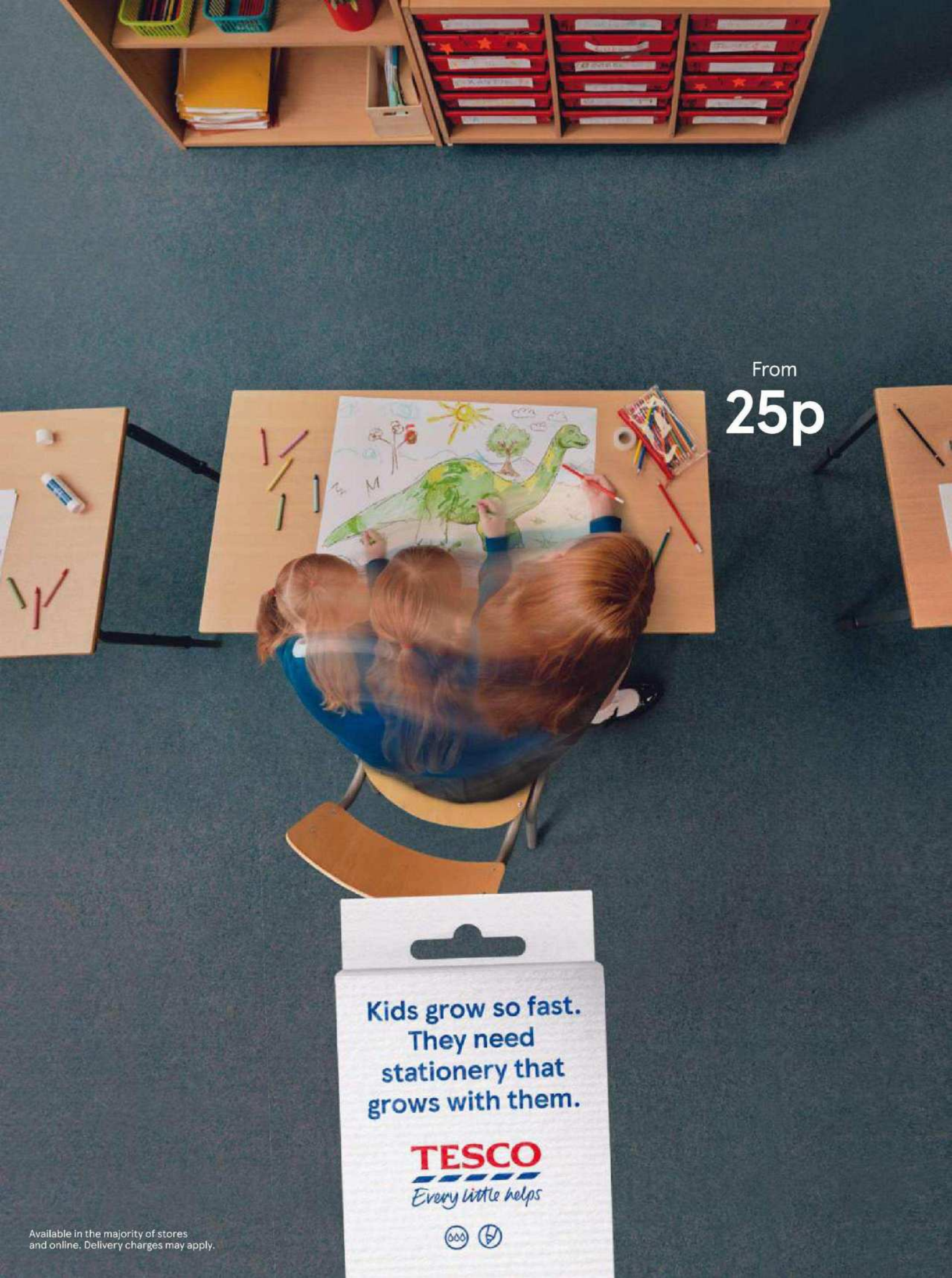

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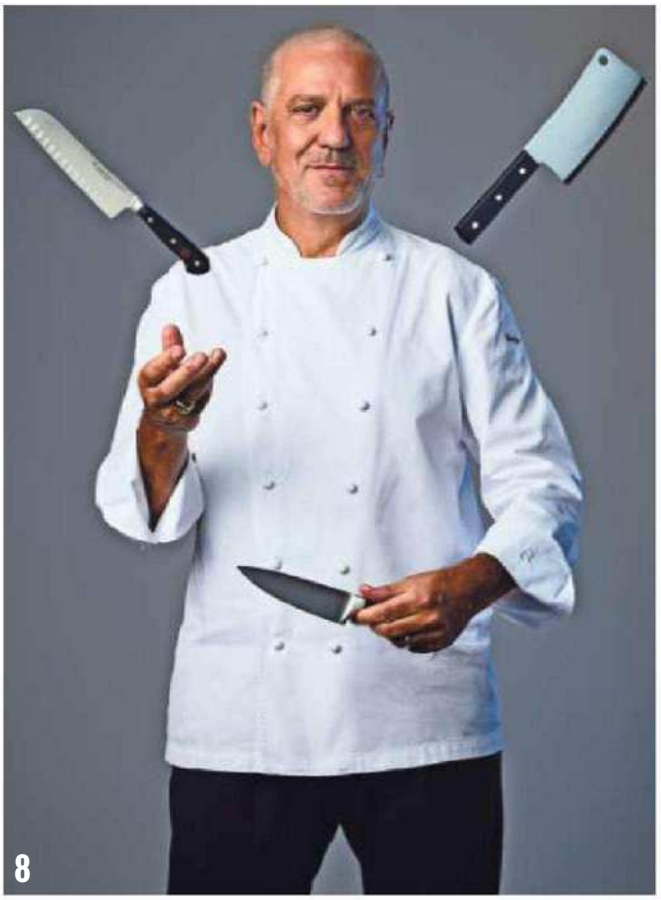

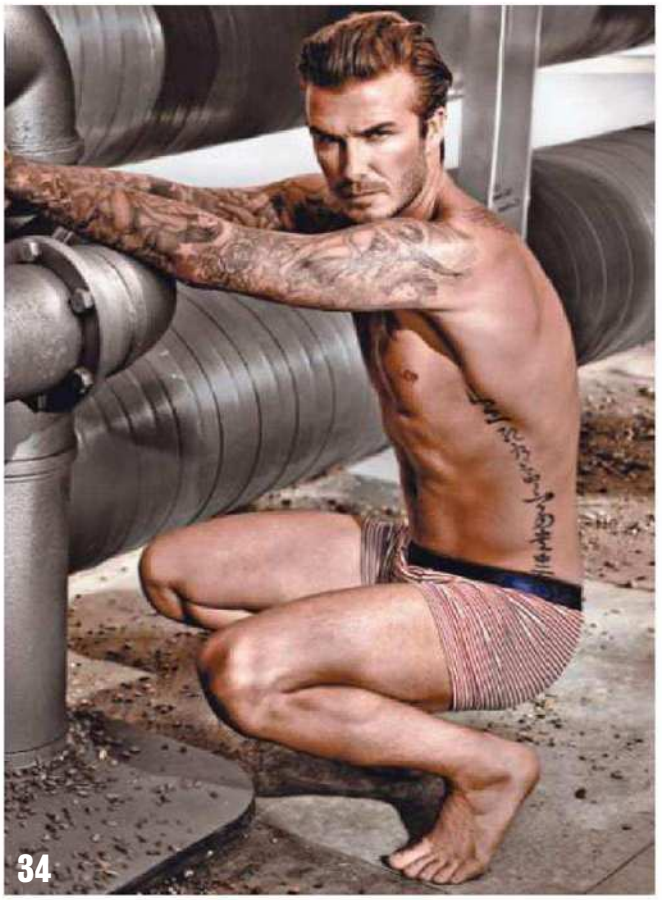

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CAITLIN MORAN

Everyone is furious about their local park being taken over by summer festivals. Except me

I'm really sorry, but, in order to crack on with this at a reasonably brisk pace, I am going to have to refer to myself as "a cool kind of person". Don't worry – it ends very badly for me. And, indeed, all other "cool kinds of persons". By the end of this, you will know us as the useless, smug, self-defeating fops we all are.

So. Here's the thing about cool kinds of persons, such as myself. Cool kinds of persons – we don't get involved in "local" stuff. Indeed, it's worse: we would probably use the word "local" as a pejorative, for something small-scale and lacklustre. "How was the play?" "It was a bit... local." "Her new husband?" "*Local.*" "What's the shop like?" "Quite *yellow* broccoli. Very... *local.*"

I must assure you, I don't feel good about writing this down. I am aware of my awfulness.

But "local" is bad – because it's people on neighbourhood WhatsApps becoming *furious* about their street having roadworks done. "Local" is people on the *same* WhatsApp group, six months previously, complaining that the street is full of potholes. "Local" is writing to the local paper and complaining about things: pigeons; trees being too big; trees being cut back; the lack of bins within a specific 50m stretch of the high street ("Anyone coming out of Greggs would have to walk all the way to Costa to dispose of an empty bag or cup! No wonder this country is so *filthy*").

Cool kinds of persons eschew all these kinds of behaviours. First, because we are not *petty*. We do all *our* – equally ineffective and self-important – fretting over Ukraine or Sudan, because we are not *whingers* or *busybodies*, but *well-read global activists* instead.

And, second, because the tone of "local outrage" is that the outragee has been long disappointed in almost *everything*. One can sense decades of exhausted waiters left in their wake. They *enjoy* complaining.

Therefore, for there to be balance in the universe, for every local complainer, there needs to be someone who does *not* complain. Not even about the complainers.

And that us is: the cool kinds of persons.

This year, however, I finally realised the error my cool kind of person silence, when I saw all the "local" reaction to the summer festivals.

ROBERT WILSON

The WhatsApp groups are full of complaining. But I love sitting in my garden hearing Wolf Alice or the Arctic Monkeys doing mic checks

I live between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace – both of which host big outdoor events. In the hottest months, the fencing goes up, the flags are raised and, from 2pm onwards, I can sit in my garden and hear Wolf Alice or Four Tet doing mic checks and running through their hits. A couple of years ago, the Arctic Monkeys did all of *AM* while I pottered around, dead-heading the roses. It was smashing.

However, you would not think this if you cruised the "local" arenas – the newspapers and WhatsApps. "It's so LOUD, I've had to close all my windows." "Half the park is now UNUSABLE, with all these FENCES up." "SHAME on Haringey council for allowing every summer to be RUINED by these events! *Do they not think of the locals*?" Literally everyone seemed to hate it.

So this is where I must, finally, become "local" myself, because I am local too – and my life hasn't been ruined by this. And, surely, I can't be the *only* one who loves the small, usually quiet train station suddenly becoming overrun with excited people, covered in glitter. Who loves the young people singing to each other. I love the place I usually watch the dog take a shit suddenly play host to Drake. I love the grass being flattened by picnic rugs, and rolling lovers, and all the necessary, messy, midsummer revelling joys. I love the wild joy of it all.

Because those photos, that everyone has on their fridges? Those now-fading snaps of you and your friends, standing in a field, and raising your glasses to the camera – to summer – to being young? *They have to be taken somewhere.* Just as there must be dog-walkers, and playgrounds for children, there must also be somewhere where young people can have their Great Days. Great Days are *just* as important. We are a noisy island, full of song, and so, sometimes, the circus *will* come to our street. What was "local" becomes, briefly, national – *international* – before all the magic vanishes again, and leaves us to the long, long silence.

Happiness circles the earth, waiting for a place to land – and if it *does*, once in a while, land in *your* local, then, really, how *novel* to hum along to the 1975 while putting out the bins.

We must all be ready to host, once in a while. To allow the photos of the Great Days to be taken.

I should really write a letter to the paper, saying all these things. ■

What I've learnt
Ruby Wax

Comedian Ruby Wax, 73, was born in Illinois before moving to the UK in the Seventies. She is best known for Ruby Wax Meets..., her series where she interviewed celebrities including Sharon Stone, OJ Simpson and Carrie Fisher. She was a contestant on 2025's I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here! and is going on a new tour. She lives in London with her husband of 38 years, the director and producer Ed Bye. They have three children.

I see a shrink and I have depression. The dark days feel like you're filled with cement and you can't move. Everything is impossible and becomes a chore. I'll have this grin on my face, pretending everything is good, but nothing is good. You have to wait for the devil to leave. There was mental illness in five generations of my family.

I'm scared to not take medication. So I keep taking it. I came off it when I was going to do psilocybin, and I ended up in a mental ward.

Donald Trump had charisma when I interviewed him in 2000, but he was also kind of evil. He hated me. When he said he wanted to be the president of the United States, I started laughing, and he threw me off his plane. He scared me. When he became president, I thought my country had gone insane.

If I looked my age, I would probably shoot myself. It's shallow. I probably only [get work done] because I'm on the stage and the screen, otherwise I wouldn't care. My face has to look youngish so people aren't scared.

Dawn French insisted that my husband Ed and I slept together. He was going out with somebody else then. She told that girl to scram, then she locked us in a hotel room and wouldn't let us out until we procreated. It was very funny.

Bill Cosby made me sit at his feet and call him Dr Cosby when we did an interview in the Nineties. [Cosby went to prison after being convicted of sexual assault in 2018, but was released in 2021 after his conviction was overturned.] He put his arms around my neck. I knew I was in trouble. Maybe he would have liked me more if I had submitted, because he likes that in women. You could guess something was not right.

I didn't draw a confession from OJ Simpson. I interviewed him for 14 hours so that I could wear him down, but I asked him if he did it and he said no.

I lost a stone on I'm a Celebrity. I was starving the whole time. I was going to tongue the dirt. Then you'd get a kangaroo's anus. I thought it was all a set-up, that we had to pretend we were hungry, so I was so surprised that they had the audacity to starve us.

Parts of my interview with Sarah Ferguson weren't allowed to be aired. Because they didn't want to upset the royals.

I thought Louis Theroux stole my career. I wouldn't speak his name, nor did I let my children speak his name. I had to give him two Baftas, that sent me into a mental ward. I was honest with him and said, "It's not your fault. I've never watched your shows. It's unfair that I took against you." He was so sweet.

My parents took their frustrations out on me. I'd get slapped. They were hardcore. It was dark. I was locked in the house like a trapped animal. It's that frustration and putting down, like you'll never be anything. The anger built until I would have either come out a schizophrenic or suicidal or famous. I happened to end up famous, but it's a fluke.

I loved Angryginge. [She was on *I'm a Celebrity* with the YouTuber]. He was deep and a gentleman. He found me adorable because I reminded him of his nan.

I've seen the show I did with Dawn French, Girls on Top – it's terrible. I didn't realise how bad it was. Ed says series two is better, but I can't bring myself to see it.

I wanted Carrie Fisher as a best friend. I pulled it off. You could see us falling in love during my interview. We were going to live together. We would have been old lesbians, living in a log cabin with shotguns. Ed would understand; he knew my love for her. You couldn't compete with her. I played the handmaiden to her goddess.

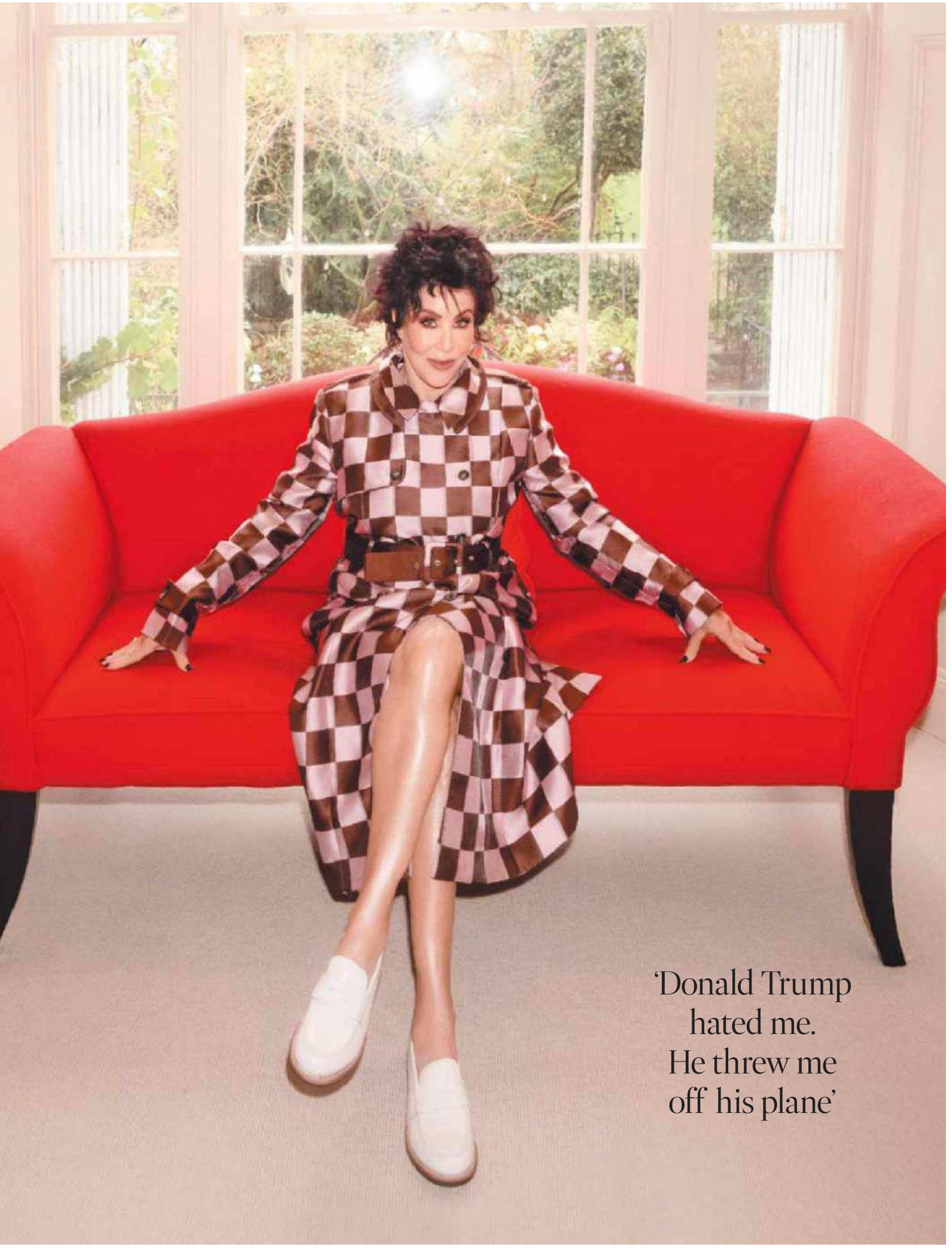
The first week of a silent retreat is hell because you just listen to your thoughts. They're really loud. But eventually, the voices get tired, so they just half-abuse you, then you can notice the scenery, and how food is delicious. It's probably like being on psilocybin. I fell in love with a digestive. I broke my silence and said, "How did you make this egg?" I'd never tasted anything like it. They said, "With an egg."

I would hate to be married to me. I travel the world on adventures. I go on tour, so I don't see Ed at all. We don't call. Once in a while, I'll call and say, "Did you put up the curtains?" I'm seeing him now because I had knee surgery.

Hugh Hefner liked me, so I moved in for two weeks. He showed me his collection of baby oil. It was really touching; it wasn't misogynistic at all. ■

Ruby Wax is touring Absolutely Famous across the UK until spring 2027; tickets are available now from rubywax.net/livetour. You can see her at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe from August 25-29 (edfringe.com/tickets)

INTERVIEW Georgina Roberts **PORTRAIT** Zoe McConnell



‘Donald Trump hated me. He threw me off his plane’

I WANT TO BE KNOWN AS A GOOD CHEF, NOT FOR MY HAIRCUT!

For more than two decades Giorgio Locatelli was at the helm of his legendary London restaurant and celebrity magnet Locanda Locatelli. Now he's joining the MasterChef judging panel – and changing his trademark look. Michael Odell meets him

Giorgio Locatelli, 63, photographed by Robert Wilson

One day in the early Noughties, Tony Blair walked into Giorgio Locatelli's Marble Arch restaurant Locanda Locatelli and said something that really worried the Italian chef.

"He'd come straight from Downing Street and said, 'Sorry guys, but I'm not appropriately dressed for a place like this,'" Locatelli relates. "That was terrible. It told me that we were in danger of becoming that type of restaurant, and I hated it."

Within a year of opening in 2002 Locanda Locatelli won a Michelin star. Its simple but beautifully cooked menu (partridge, rabbit, truffles) drew the likes of Madonna, Bill Clinton, Brad Pitt and Kate Moss. Once, when there were no tables available, the rock band U2 ate pasta in the kitchen.

But what kind of restaurant is that kind of restaurant?

"With a dress code, with an atmosphere where people feel judged," Locatelli says. "Blair was the prime minister, he wears what he likes! My philosophy is: beautiful food is for everyone. I really dislike elitism, the idea of ordinary working people feeling left out."

Locatelli's wife of more than 30 years, Plaxy, built the restaurant's reputation with him. She is listening to our conversation.

"Many of our staff came straight from remote Italian villages and they could be a bit small-minded," she chips in. "On one occasion they rang me to say a man wearing a dress was asking for a table and should they ask him to leave? I said, 'No, this is London! This snobby attitude is not us. We welcome everyone and anything goes!' And when I got to the restaurant, the diner in question was wearing a kilt."

Locanda unexpectedly closed its doors in January 2025. I've heard it was because of a sudden rent rise of almost 100 per cent.

"We cannot talk about it for legal reasons," Locatelli says. "All I will say is we never took a holiday for the first seven years while we built that place. But for the last three years we made a maximum 5 per cent profit on our turnover, compared to 13-15 per cent at other places I've worked. The manager [at Locanda] we hired got paid better than us!"

Fortunately, no sooner had the restaurant closed than a major TV vacancy came along. In July 2025 the *MasterChef* presenter John Torode was fired after allegedly using racist language at an after-works drinks party (his co-host, Gregg Wallace, had been fired earlier in the year following multiple accusations of inappropriate behaviour). Locatelli got the call to be a judge on *Celebrity MasterChef*.

"An honour," he says. "*MasterChef* is known around the world."

The 63-year-old Italian knows both the brand and its former hosts well. In 2022 the show's Chef's Table challenge was staged at Locatelli's restaurant and he hosted the segment alongside Torode. Locatelli was also a big fan of Quaglino's, the London restaurant where Torode made his name in the Nineties (Wallace supplied the fruit and veg).

"John is a brilliant chef," he says. "And in the old days Gregg tried to sell me his veg, but I always said no. For me, it had to be a specialist Italian importer."

Has either of them wished him luck with his new venture?

"No, no messages," he says with a smile.

Celebrity MasterChef is where C-listers come to be humbled. The musician Jay McGuiness? The actor Nitin Ganatra? Most names in the new series are as unfamiliar as the additives listed on a Pot Noodle. Yet the drama is real.

In 2008 a soap star called Mark Moraghan stormed out when his stuffed rabbit went wrong. In 2016 the singer Sinitta was roundly denounced for serving Torode and Wallace raw meat. Twice.

But being a presenter is a big deal and Locatelli was up against other major names for the gig. He won't tell me who the other candidates were, but says he immediately clicked with his co-presenter, the food writer Grace Dent (who had already replaced Wallace).

"She's great," he says beaming. "She only has to give one little look and everyone knows: too much pepper or this sauce has split."

I've seen a few episodes of the new show. Locatelli has definitely positioned himself as the "bad cop" of the duo.

"With celebrities, you get some thinking it's a bit of a joke. Of course we want it to be fun, but a joke? No. No joke. I quickly tell them I want them to improve. That's what I agreed with the BBC. Slagging people off is no good. These people must show progress."

I met Locatelli in 2022 when he presented Channel 4's not dissimilar *Celeb Cooking School*. A selection of "oven-shy" contestants set out to cook but apparently were also determined to traumatise Locatelli. The former singer Kerry Katona presented him with pasta and tinned tuna. The Happy Mondays frontman Shaun Ryder cracked eggs on his own forehead.

"The British are good at so many things like design, style and rock'n'roll," Locatelli says. "But when you see them fail just to feed themselves, it's worrying. My explanation is: the British lost many culinary skills after the war. That's when tins and packets, fast food and UPFs took hold. Food became fuel, whereas in Italy it's always been an identity. On *MasterChef*, the challenge for me is to judge, to teach a little, but never to humiliate."

'On MasterChef, the challenge for me is to judge, to teach a little, but never to humiliate'

Locatelli with Nigella Lawson at the River Cafe, 2016

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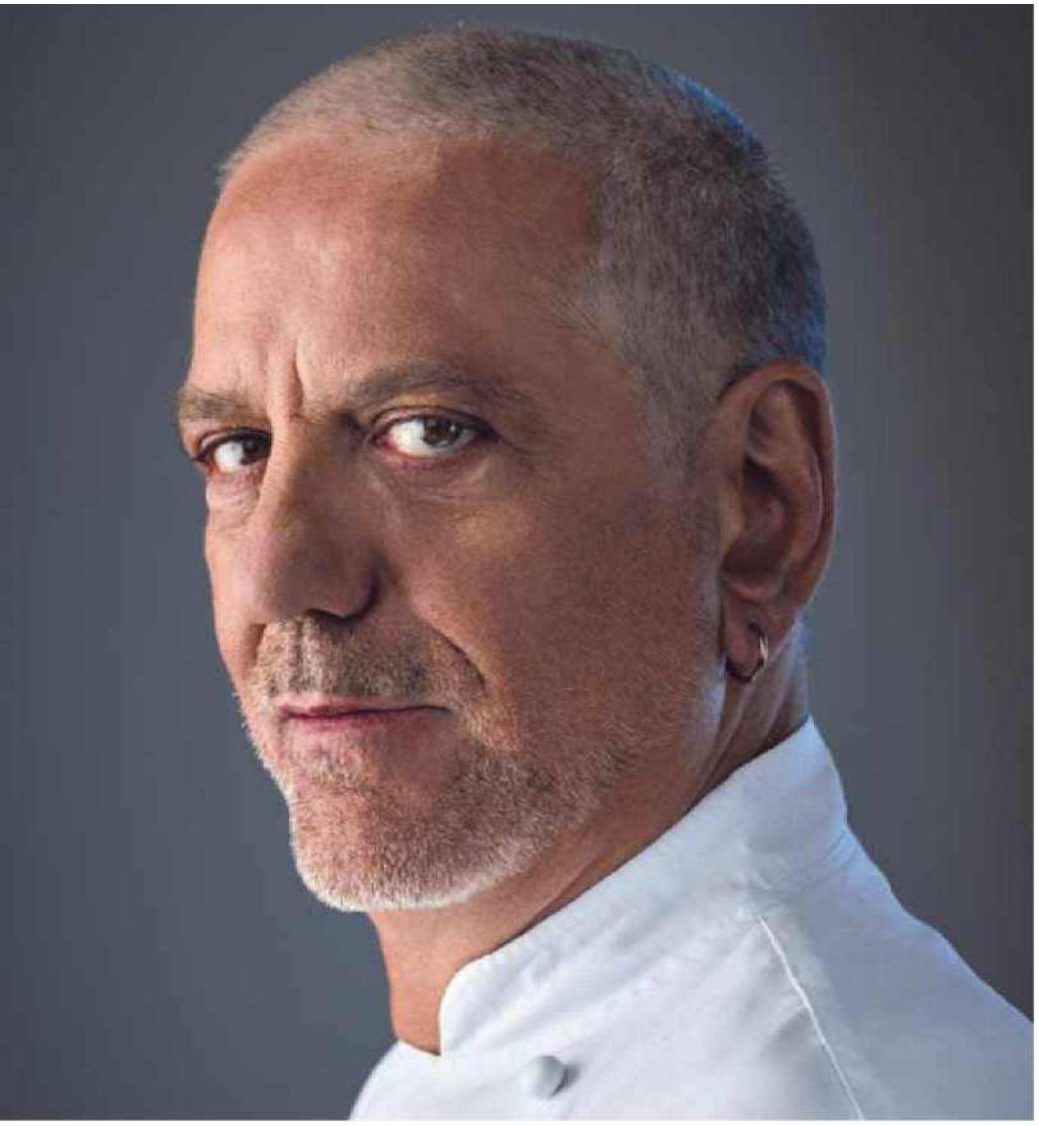

Locatelli knows what it's like to feel judged. He first worked in a kitchen aged six, making fruit salad for guests at the family's hotel in Corgeno, a village on the shore of Lake Comabbio in northern Italy. He was paid 5,000 lira a day (about £3), which he handed over to his grandmother.

"I have worked all my life," he says solemnly.

Aged 16, he got his first proper job at a restaurant, but the dream almost ended there: after placing prawns into water that wasn't yet boiling, his boss told him he'd never make it as a chef.

"That really hurt me," he says even now.

And later, after training in Switzerland and at the Savoy in London, Locatelli worked at the three Michelin star La Tour d'Argent in Paris, where they were horrible to him. They called him "Spaghetti", "wop" and even the c-word.

"That is not the way to treat people," he affirms.

Hmm, but Locatelli is not averse to fighting fire with fire. In the mid-Nineties he returned to London to open his acclaimed Italian, Zafferano. After winning his first Michelin star – it was the first Italian restaurant in the UK to do so – he promptly sent the chef who told him he'd never make it a note saying, "F*** you".

And while recruiting his team at Zafferano he reputedly fired more than 30 chefs in one month.

"Yes, I did," he confirms. "Because at that time people would walk in and say, 'I want to be a chef.' I was not going to risk the standards I set for myself."

"Be honest, you also fired quite a few because they were French," Plaxy chips in. Locatelli throws his head back and laughs.

"It's possible this was also a factor," he allows.

Does Locatelli have what it takes to make a good judge? Torode could be unsmiling, authoritative and once commented that a contestant's poached liver dish looked like "a deer had thrown up in the woods".

By contrast, Locatelli is warmer but definitely has an anti-authoritarian streak. Both his grandfathers were communists and when Locanda opened, he rather guiltily told a journalist: "Yes, of course I feed f***ing rich bastards, don't I?"

I note he was once also very much against being a TV chef.

'I do think British food has got sexier, and we have to thank Jamie Oliver for it'

"I hated the thought that somebody would see me on the television and think what a f***in' wanker the guy is – look, he's out making himself big on the television, and you know you go to his restaurant and he's shit," he once said.

Has he come to terms with that now?

"This is how I felt before I earned my place," he says with a shrug. "And anyway, I think not being a wanker is a good ambition. Success should not make you a wanker."

At the beginning of the new *Celebrity MasterChef* he is introduced as a "global icon", which he says made him cringe a bit.

"I rebel against this a little bit," he says. "I say to the BBC, 'Turn it down a bit... just call me a cook.'"

His latest rebellion is there for all to see: we meet under some south London railway arches. I spot a shaven-headed guy in a sharp suit, shades and trainers sporting a hooped earring. I think, "Oh no, wrong place. Mr Big is closing a deal!"

Locatelli has replaced his luxuriant locks with a buzz cut.

"I just finished filming and with all this 'Stand by' and 'Cut!' I got so hot, so I just decided to get rid of it all," he explains.

But it's your trademark, I say.

"I want to be known as a good chef, not for a bloody haircut!" he snaps, managing to sound both Italian and gorblimey London at the same time.

I think this slightly reluctant stardom creates a pleasing chemistry with Grace Dent. With her big earrings and inscrutable witchy demeanour she is like a tarot reader who can foresee who is going to ruin Italian cuisine.

"You've actually got gnocchi on your face," she points out to one contestant, the comedian Joe Pasquale. Meanwhile, Locatelli can hardly contain himself as Pasquale sets about making his signature dish called Frankenstein pie. It contains 42 ingredients including stilton cheese, truffle oil and fennel.

"A good chef learns that less is usually more: two or three superb ingredients, then take the others out," Locatelli says. "But Joe is a one-off – he thinks in a very special way."

How do British contestants compare with those on *MasterChef Italia*, on which Locatelli has been a judge for seven years?

"I've never seen an Italian cook a Frankenstein pie before," he marvels. "But one thing I do notice is there is a young British generation who are learning to ➡

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cook from social media. Personally I am not a fan of it, and people photographing their meals in my restaurant drove me crazy, but... you can now learn how to cook on TikTok. Incredible."

Locatelli's 2006 memoir-cum-recipe book, *Made In Italy*, told a distinctly old-fashioned food story. Nothing says "rural upbringing" quite like getting shot in the backside by a grandfather who mistook you for a wild bird (as happened to Locatelli and his older brother, Roberto). Locatelli also relates discovering the link between food and wine and sex at an early age.

I remind him how he once cited Elizabeth Hurley eating at his restaurant as an example.

"Well, you enter the body of someone, don't you?" he said. "It's nice sometimes when you cook something and you see Liz Hurley swallowing what you've done."

"My God, I was a young man when I said this," he says. "But I do think British food has got sexier, and we have to thank Jamie Oliver for it. In the old days a boy took a girl to the pub. Now he takes her home and cooks her a beautiful meal and there is a sensuality here. British food never used to be this sexy."

Some scenes in the new *MasterChef* suggest there is still a way to go. When Grace Dent asks Locatelli if the contestants have inspired ideas for his future menus he seems close to despair.

"Only at the beginning," he insists. "You will see some surprises later on because there is some good cooking. But I think there is still a divide in this country between those who are exposed to good food ideas and those who are not. I work with the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts [Locatelli teaches children to cook in schools] and I still think we need to fight a lack of confidence in the British kitchen. That's when they reach for a packet or a tin. Also, I don't like to see people fight their ingredients – they should be your friend."

How committed is Locatelli to that ideal? Would he, say, do an ad for McDonald's?

"Well, when you see the money these companies put on the table in front of you, it's hard to say no," he says with a shrug. "But McDonald's? Probably not."

In fact, after 40 years in the UK Locatelli is starting to feel rather British himself.

"Everything good I've done has been here," he says. "I consider myself a Londoner."

His mother died recently and inevitably there was a lot of bureaucracy to deal with.

"I felt quite British in Italy when I had to queue for some documents after she died," he says. "Italians don't queue and it annoys me. I also feel British when it comes to a certain understatement.

GETTY IMAGES, BBC

With his wife, Plaxy, at Locanda Locatelli, 2016

'Everything good I've done has been here,' he says. 'I consider myself a Londoner'

On Celebrity MasterChef with fellow judge Grace Dent

In Milan, people wear Gucci and Prada; they dress twice as rich as they really are. In Britain, it's the opposite: they dress half as rich as they really are. They don't show off and I admire it."

It's been quite the journey. He and Plaxy first met through a mutual friend in the mid-Eighties when he was at the Savoy.

"I thought he was cute but he dressed badly and didn't speak English, which I found annoying," she recalls.

A pity, because Locatelli already had plenty of stories to tell. For example, he was earning £76 for a 90-hour-week at the Savoy. Then one day Frank Sinatra checked in, taking the entire sixth floor.

"He asked me to cook him *pasta e fagioli* [pasta and beans], which I did. Afterwards his bodyguard gave me a roll of £50 notes in an elastic band as a thank-you," he says beaming. "The first week in my life I felt rich!"

Three years later, his English much improved, he and Plaxy fell in love and embarked on their remarkable culinary journey together. He cooks, she does front of house. But it goes further than that. After the Tony Blair incident she also took on pastoral care.

"Plaxy decided to educate our staff," Locatelli recalls. "They are from Italian villages – a small world – so she arranged for them to go to the cinema, art galleries and the theatre, to experience London, to learn something about life and themselves. If you want your staff to stop being snobbish about the prime minister, you have to teach them."

Things have been much less stressful for the couple since they gave up Locanda. They still have a small restaurant in Limassol, Cyprus, and are about to launch a website, LocaDeli, where you can buy olive oil, pasta sauces and coffee, even Giorgio's favourite negroni.

"I got sick of not having a decent drink on a plane, so now you can buy a sachet, put it in your pocket and when you take off, just ask for a cup with ice," he advises.

The main event, though, is their new 80-seater Osteria Locatelli in the Sainsbury's Wing of the National Gallery in London, where the dream of easy, accessible Italian dining has come true. You can get a bowl of pasta for £20 or, alternatively, stand in Bar Giorgio and guzzle a *maritozzo* (a sweet Roman bun filled with cream) and sink a coffee.

"That's the way we do it in an Italian city and I think Londoners like it," he enthuses. "No snobbery."

He and Plaxy have a second home in Castro Marina, Puglia, where they plan to spend more time. Locatelli's back sometimes hurts from all those years stooping over a work bench, which means he no longer zips about on his brother's BMW R80 motorbike (Roberto died of cancer in 2014).

"When I rode his old motorbike, I felt I was with him," he says fondly.

But there's another reason he doesn't ride, of course.

"I can't be the rebel," he says. "My contract says no skiing, no riding motorbikes. I am a *MasterChef* judge, a position of great responsibility." ■

Celebrity MasterChef is on BBC1 and iPlayer; locatelliatnationalgallery.co.uk

‘I WAS CONSTANTLY UNDERMINED AND UNDERESTIMATED’

Holly Willoughby, 45, photographed by Tom Jackson. Styling: Prue White

She was the wholesome queen of daytime TV – until a succession of disasters, from her co-presenter Phillip Schofield's scandal to a terrifying kidnap attempt, led her to step away. Now Holly Willoughby is back. Jane Mulkerrins meets her

Five seconds into the first episode of her new show, Holly Willoughby, wholesome, polished queen of daytime TV, drops an f-bomb. In her pink-and-cream on-set kitchen, decked out with a cream Smeg fridge and matching whisk, Willoughby, in tonally corresponding white jeans and pink blouse, declares, "I f***ing love that man."

While millions will relate to such affection for her first guest, the twinkling actor and gourmand Stanley Tucci – who chitchats cosily with our host, drinks pinot grigio at the kitchen island, and, inexplicably, reads out the ingredients list of a Fray Bentos steak and kidney pie, before whipping up some courgette pasta together (in a Stanley Tucci-branded pan, part of an £800 set) – daytime TV language this is not.

But after three years away from television – having left *This Morning* in October 2023 after 14 years on its sofa – and a litany of challenges both personal and professional, last week Willoughby returned to our screens (albeit smaller ones) with her new lifestyle show, *Holly Willoughby Together* – unscripted, on demand and on YouTube.

"Of course it's a risk," she tells me on another, green leather sofa in a photography studio in southwest London. "It's not safe. I can't fall back on anything. You're relying on people coming to find you and staying with you because they want to watch you."

But, she says, sipping a glass mug of tea, "I'm not being forced upon anybody. So at least you know that whoever's watching or subscribing now, they're there because they want to be. I know I'm not everyone's cup of tea. So fine, watch or don't. You have the control. It's up to you now."

Comparisons with Meghan Markle's short-lived lifestyle series, *With Love, Meghan*, seem inevitable, which Willoughby doesn't mind. "I know it got an absolute hammering, but I actually really enjoyed her show," she says.

She already has her own lifestyle brand, Wylde Moon, selling candles and fragrance and spiritual ruminations. Just how woo is Willoughby? "Oh, I could be really woo if I was unleashed." She owns her own singing bowls and has taken her level one and two crystal healing training. "We've charged a load of crystals on the set."

And while the first batch of episodes – already in the can – will include cooking, beauty, fashion and interviews, the format, she says, is flexible. "As soon as we start dropping episodes, we'll know what people like, and we can adapt and we can change it. We're not set to a format, so it can evolve and go in any direction."

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With co-presenter Phillip Schofield on This Morning in 2023

Reviews so far suggest a swift evolution may be required. Giving the show just two stars, Carol Midgely wrote in The Times that, "it will have to become edgier than this to make its mark in a very crowded field" (though she did call the set "tasteful" and admit that "it looks nice"), while the Telegraph's scathing one-star review declared that "Holly Willoughby's dire YouTube show makes Meghan look good" and that "not even Stanley Tucci can redeem this 50-minute borefest of awkward small talk, forced swearing and pie tin trivia". And The Daily Mail agreed, calling it "a steaming landfill of banality that makes even Meghan's look good".

The Independent (two stars) said that the "awkward" new show "feels like *The Blair Witch Project* filmed inside a Habitat store", while The Guardian asserted that "the whole thing comes off as an aggressive audition for whether Willoughby is allowed to be famous again". Its reviewer did note, however, that while "it is not essential viewing... you can't help but root for the show", and that "there's still some pleasure to be had from watching a person get on with doing something they're naturally very good at".

'The kidnap plot made me feel vulnerable in a way that you haven't ever imagined'

For almost two decades, since she and Phillip Schofield began hosting *Dancing on Ice* together in 2006, Willoughby was ITV's golden girl, going on to present *The Xtra Factor*, *Celebrity Juice* and *Surprise Surprise*, to stand in for Ant McPartlin on *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* while he went to rehab in 2018, as well as her carriage-clock-worthy 14-year service alongside Schofield on *This Morning*.

But in recent years, the presenter has endured a succession of painful and public incidents. When she and Schofield were accused of skipping the queue for the Queen's lying-in-state in September 2022, Willoughby said, "Like hundreds of accredited broadcasters and journalists, we were given special permission to access the hall. It was strictly for the purpose of reporting on the event for millions of people in the UK who haven't been able to visit Westminster in person... None of the broadcasters and journalists there took anyone's place in the queue." ITV stood by them, yet thousands signed a petition for the pair to be fired.

Less than a year later, after Schofield stepped down from the show over what he called an "unwise, but not illegal" affair with a younger male colleague at *This Morning*, Willoughby – who was never accused of wrongdoing – received flak for both being unaware of the affair (which Schofield admitted he had lied about) and apparently turning on her longtime colleague and supposed best friend.

She was mocked even more heavily, however, for her now infamous monologue in the wake of Schofield's departure, in which, in Midgely's words, "she gazed like a concerned Bambi into the camera and asked the viewers of Britain: 'Firstly, are you OK?'... A thrillingly awful, saccharine spectacle that was endlessly spoofed and memed."

Five months later, she, too, resigned.

Then there was the court case. In December 2025, Willoughby pleaded guilty to knocking a rider off his scooter and breaking his neck while driving her Mini Cooper in London. The rider was attempting to overtake Willoughby on his Piaggio at 20mph, when she failed to indicate while making a right-hand turn. She was given six points on her licence and fined £2,444, including court costs.

This came just months after Roxy Media, the production company Willoughby runs with her producer husband, Dan Baldwin, was declared to owe £329,715 in unpaid corporation tax and threatened with closure by HMRC (the matter was resolved).

When Schofield came out as gay on TV in 2020

With her husband, Dan Baldwin, at Ascot this year

After such a run, and a nice, solid break from the celebrity rigmarole, some might wonder why she wanted to return at all.

"I wasn't sure if I did either," she admits. "I had no idea. I didn't know what was going to happen or how I was going to feel. And I couldn't look that far into the future.

"I love my work, and it's a really big part of me," she continues. "But I thought, if it comes back, great; if it doesn't, fine."

This wasn't about ratings or popularity or public opinion though; a week before she resigned from *This Morning*, a plot was foiled to kidnap, rape and murder Willoughby. A 37-year-old security guard, Gavin Plumb, who had attacked at least two women previously, was caught by an undercover US police officer in a chatroom called "Abduct Lovers", where Plumb revealed his scheme to target Willoughby, his "ultimate fantasy", in a home invasion, abduct her, take her to his home in Harlow, Essex, and murder her in an abandoned building.

When Plumb was arrested, officers found more than a million images of women on his devices, including more than 10,000 of Willoughby. He was sentenced to life imprisonment with a 16-year minimum term.

"Things have changed, I've changed – certain things will never be the same," says Willoughby. "You can't not change with something like that. And in some ways, I am stronger. And in some ways, I'm not," she admits.

"I still find it hard to..." she begins, but stalls, tears springing from her big blue eyes as I scramble to find a tissue. "I can't... I'm sorry..." she tries. "I just don't really have the words for it. It's hard to explain..." She dabs at her eyes and waves a hand apologetically at her throat.

We are meeting just days after the former cabinet minister Ann Widdecombe was allegedly murdered in her Dartmoor home, reigniting the debate about the safety of not only MPs but everyone – women in particular – in the public eye.

The foiled plot, Willoughby says, made her feel vulnerable "in a way that you haven't ever imagined feeling vulnerable. And I don't think you're meant to test that, that vulnerability.""

The younger of two sisters, Willoughby was born and raised in the South Downs north of Brighton, where her father managed a double glazing business and her mother had been an air hostess before having children.

At their private girls' school, she loved drama, "but I was never the one that got picked for anything because I was an apologetic performer. I knew I liked it, but I wasn't particularly confident in anything that I did. I was always really embarrassed."

She is dyslexic, and "didn't love learning", but was a committed "good girl". "I was really scared of being in trouble – still am – but I loved boys," she laughs.

At 14, she was spotted by a modelling agency, signed to Storm Models and began appearing in teen magazines including Just Seventeen and Mizz. "That was the real turning point because I realised, you're going to have to try and stop being so shy or you'll never do anything. I had to put on my big girl pants and make myself do it. And like with anything, it's fake it till you make it. The more I did it, the more normal and natural it became."

Modelling led to presenting. In her first job, on the Saturday morning *S Club TV*, a vehicle for the pop group S Club 7. "We were really crap," she says, laughing. "But I feel that back then we were given a little bit more time to get better. I really hope that people coming through the industry get given that chance. Because it's really unfair to expect people to nail it on their first go.

"It's like with this YouTube show – I know it's not going to be perfect when it starts," she says. "Don't expect perfection. I don't want the pressure of having to get it right the first time. I want to learn it."

She met Baldwin on the set of *Ministry of Mayhem* and married him in 2007. After the birth of their first son, Harry, in 2009, she went back to work, presenting *The Xtra Factor*, after just five weeks. Harry came with her to set, with her mum looking after him, "and I was running backwards and forwards feeding him. I don't know how I did it. I probably shouldn't have done it," she says. "It was wild, but I was only 27. And that's why when Chester [her third child] came along [in 2015], I took a year off. At the time, everybody said, 'You're mad, what are you doing?' Everybody was advising me against it. And it was the best thing that I did. I came back and it was like I'd never gone – literally nothing had changed."

Together is heavily branded and sponsored by Voy, an online platform specialising in menopause and weight-loss medication. While she deftly sidesteps questions about her own peri/menopausal status, 45-year-old Willoughby is currently undaunted by ageing, she says. "I don't mind getting a bit older. For years, I was treated so young. I was constantly undermined and underestimated."

Yet, she says candidly, at the time, she didn't much mind. "I was happy to hide. It didn't make me cross. I knew it was happening, but I thought that was OK, because at least I couldn't disappoint anyone. Which is ridiculous – but that's because I was young, and not very brave," she says. "It was only when I got older, I realised that it wasn't OK.

"When you're younger, you always think getting older is the worst thing in the world," she continues. "But actually, I find it much easier. I feel more seen and heard, as me, than I did when I was younger, and I find this bit quite empowering. I like being the older one in the room, because some of the stuff that comes with age gives you a bit more agency."

Together, for example, was very much her idea. "I needed a lot of support to make it come alive, but it is definitely what I wanted to do," she says. "This is the most hands-on of anything I've ever done.

"People always have a version of you in their heads, so when they're creating something or coming up with an idea or a format, it's a version of what they know you as or have seen you in or heard you on."

The version of Willoughby we get to see in *Together* is the closest to herself that she's ever put out there, she says. "Not because in the past I didn't feel like I've been the real me, but because down to deciding on the tiles on the wall and the taps, I'm in the fabric of this in every way."

There's no autocue, no real script, and the microphones are always live. "So you get to see a bit of the workings and the goings-on and all that stuff behind the scenes. And I love that because I feel like that's the real stuff.

"I hope one day, when the time's right and the project's right, that I will go back and do some telly stuff – I'm a telly girl, and I love it," says Willoughby. "But for now, this is what I'm doing. And it's interesting to explore, to build something." ■

Holly Willoughby Together *is on YouTube*

I'm 14. For a year I refused to go to school. My parents could not leave me alone for one moment

A teenager's story

Laila Manzoor loved her friends and wanted to learn, but for ten months she was unable to cope in a classroom. She explains why – and her father, the writer Sarfraz Manzoor, describes the pain of seeing your child struggle

Laila and Sarfraz Manzoor
photographed by Tim Jobling

‘Just drive around the block once more. Please?”

I’m in the passenger seat of the family car. My mum is driving. I look down at my legs. They are shaking. I’m crying, shouting, screaming, my face is mottled rouge. I was so close to going in this time.

It’s late September 2025, and I’d just started year 10 in a new school. I wasn’t starting there for any interesting reason – my previous school just finished in year 9. I’d started at the new school so well; I’d practically hollowed out my soul to go in for the first three weeks. I was desperate to shine, to exude confidence, charisma and coolness, and this was incredibly exhausting. The tiredness built up until I was too weak to keep going. The effort of trying to go in and not managing to became a vicious circle.

I tried so hard to go but every morning played out identically: Mum and I would leave the house and the closer we got to school the more anxious I would become. We would spend hours driving around the same blocks around the school. I would be crying, my head shoved between my legs, trying to escape my own head. In the end, we would come home. I would storm upstairs and Mum would phone her work and apologise for being late again. I would not go to school for ten months.

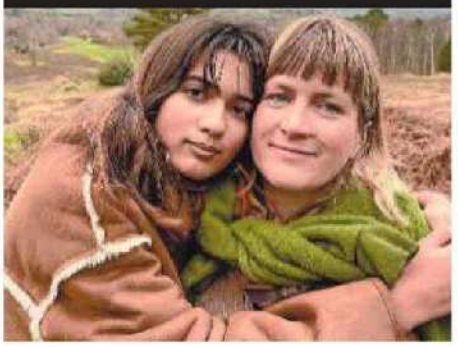
I’ve always been an anxious person around school. Two years ago, in year 8, I took weeks off school in the autumn term – it wasn’t laziness or a hatred of learning. Everyone around me grew concerned and eventually I got a diagnosis of autism with a PDA profile. People with PDA – pathological demand avoidance – struggle with having other people tell them what to do.

At my old school, things for the most part were pretty stable; I missed a couple of days a month, sometimes a few days a week, but I had many friends, loved learning and managed to cope. Obviously that sounds like an average bratty teenage girl, not doing as her parents say, missing school and so forth. But with PDA I can’t do things I want to do. My family can’t go abroad right now for fear I will refuse to go on the plane, kicking and screaming. I freeze when told to do simple things like brushing my teeth or getting out of bed.

The worst part is I truly loved my new school. I’m still in contact with some incredible friends I made in those few weeks. I just could not go in. I so wanted to be the “old me”, a mythical creation who never existed. A girl who felt no anxiety, was effortlessly adored and admired. You might be wondering what I was doing at home for all those months. I knitted and crocheted blankets. I painted cats and cried into my real ones’ warm fur. I reread Jacqueline Wilson books from my childhood. I listened to music, sad ballads lamenting the cruelty of the world – mostly Taylor Swift and Fiona Apple. I watched *Love Island* and scared myself with true crime content and news articles.

Life was hard for all of us. My parents’ jobs and relationship were strained by me, and it’s hard to sit with that. I hated myself so ferociously. I struggled to see even my closest friends for fear I’d fail. Failing was speaking or acting wrong, and I did it a lot. I longed for a manual: what buttons to push and dials to turn could get me working again? I got worse. I couldn’t be in the house on my own for half a nanosecond. If we ran out of toilet paper or milk, I’d trail behind my dad to the shops in my pyjamas. My parents couldn’t see friends or go on date nights. My younger brother saw me as an attention vacuum. I sucked away his peaceful life with panic attacks and meltdowns.

Laila with her mother, Bridget, in 2024



‘I hated myself. I struggled to see my friends for fear I’d fail’

My parents tried so hard to engage me in education. Dad ordered AQA *Macbeth* revision books from Amazon, but the spines stayed smooth and the pages stayed blank. I felt like a fizzing ball of anger at the world but mostly at myself. You blame yourself when everyone around you can cope with things you just can’t. Every night I would tell my parents tomorrow was the day. I’d make demands for clothes or make-up, and they would eagerly agree. They would do anything for me to go in. But I never did.

I was finally seen by a psychiatrist in late November. After an hour-long chat recounting my life, I was put on the most boring antidepressant. Sertraline. I mean, Jennifer Lawrence takes sertraline; it’s hardly niche. One common side effect of sertraline is that shortly after starting on it you often begin to feel worse than before. A few weeks after starting it, I remember locking myself in my bathroom and screaming, “Help me, I need a doctor. I’m broken. I need hospital.” I remember little from those times; perhaps I subconsciously blocked it all out. The next week I had stolen my 50mg and 25mg packets of sertraline from my mum’s bedroom and swallowed around 500mg. I thought if I took more I’d get more happy. I just wanted to feel happy. I would have sold my right eye and both my kidneys to just feel happy. Happiness was a lost concept to me then – a holy grail.

Mum called 999; she didn’t know how much I’d taken. She knew I needed to go to hospital. Scared of ambulances, I unlocked the bathroom, and we drove down. It was my little brother’s birthday party the next day, and he was upset that it would be ruined because of me. I had a sore tummy and was unquenchably thirsty. I sat in the kids’ waiting room, crying to my mum. Two-year-olds with chickenpox stared at me.

I struggle to recollect most of my time there. I remember a woman screaming and threatening to report a doctor who wasn’t doing enough for her daughter. I didn’t go to the loo the whole time I was there so I wouldn’t walk past her. I remember sobbing, a nice nurse bringing me cheese sandwiches. I remember the bed being made for someone half my height, and lots of tests. They debated whether I should stay in a ward, but after my begging, said I was OK to go home. At around 1am I was discharged from A&E.

In January I started therapy thanks to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) with an incredible woman. She was called Julie, and I still miss her. I also had a psychologist once a week for an hour. I would rant to my therapist, “Julie. What’s the point in trying if I’m just broken? Sometimes you need to accept that you can’t do things – be a realist. I need to be content with how I am.”

“Laila. Would you tell your friends that they’re inherently brok...”

“That’s a stupid question, I’m like Black Swan, the sore thumb, the exception, not the rule.”

Slowly, through therapy I learnt about my brain. How I couldn’t sort between normal thoughts and intrusive thoughts. How I could intercept thought cycles and calm myself down. Therapy was only given to me after I went to hospital. That still makes me so upset for the time I could have got back.

Julie suggested I make a list of small but very terrifying challenges to try. The first one was being home alone for five minutes. I remember the fear of my mum, dad and brother leaving. I remember their promise to run back if I called. And after two minutes, I couldn’t do it. I screamed and yelled on the phone, and they came

GROOMING: CELINE NONON AT ARLINGTON ARTISTS. DRESS, NOBODYSCHILD.COM. BOOTS, SCHUH.CO.UK. TOP, ASOS.COM. TROUSERS, URBANOUTFITTERS.COM

‘IT’S AWFUL TO SEE YOUR CHILD RETREAT’

By Sarfraz Manzoor

There is an old cliché that as a parent one is only as happy as your unhappiest child. This helps explain why I have been so low for so much of the past ten months. It is almost impossible to express how it has felt as her father to see Laila struggle as she has this past year. It is awful to see your child – who you know is smart and funny – retreat from life, to see this person who you have seen radiate vivacity now emanate despair as her world shrinks to the size of her bedroom. It is also very lonely because pathological demand avoidance is not well known nor well understood. To be the parent of someone with PDA means unlearning all you thought you knew about parenting. It means ignoring all the well-intentioned advice from friends who suggest everything could be improved with a dose of tough love.

There were plenty of times this past year when I succumbed to despair and fright. There were months when Laila could not be left alone for a minute; not being able to spend any time with Bridget without Laila made life feel intensely claustrophobic. I would see my daughter in bed staring at her phone for hours on end and wonder what life would look like for her in a year, two years or three years. I wanted to hold onto hope but it was not easy. Fortunately, I am married to the most patient, most optimistic woman in the world, and even when I felt hopeless, Bridget never gave up.

Laila is one of the lucky ones. She has a mother who works as an autism specialist and a younger brother, Ezra, who is kind and, considerate. She is fortunate to have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan), which has ensured, among other things, that her school was able to find the funding for home tutors. She has been lucky in that her last school was extraordinarily understanding, and never made us feel like bad parents for not being able to get our daughter to school. She was lucky to have help from CAMHS, who provided 12 weeks of at-home therapy, twice a week, following her overdose. She was lucky to be offered a place in a new school that specialises in children who have had problems with attendance, where she can study for her GCSEs in one year.

With her younger brother, Ezra, 9, in June

It is only due to an army of therapists and the support of her old and new school that Laila is now able to imagine a hopeful future.

When I suggested to Laila that she write about the past ten months, and how it had felt missing an academic year of school, I never imagined her words would end up in The Times. I am deeply proud of Laila’s ability to articulate her struggles. I also asked her because I thought it could be a way of getting her to discuss things with me that she would ordinarily refuse to do.

I hope her story reaches other parents and their children who are feeling helpless and hopeless and gives them the strength and confidence to keep believing in better days.

back. I had failed at the easiest goal. I couldn’t even be alone for two minutes, so how the hell could I go to school?

Hope isn’t at all compatible with anxiety for me. But I knew that when, if ever, I was out of this, I would be a very strong and incredible and aspirational girl. I would go, at some very clear point, from the World’s Most Broken Girl to the World’s Best Girl. It isn’t magic, “getting better”, but when I did seven minutes in my house alone I felt lighter. I felt pathetically proud of such a mundane and basic achievement.

In spring 2026, after many months out of school, my school informed my parents they could not provide the education I needed. I remember screaming with regret and grief into my pillow. The school offered tutors to come to my house to teach English and maths. I used my brain for the first time in eight months, and I felt such a new hunger to learn. I raced through quadratics and *Macbeth*, *Frankenstein* and poetry.

I was also recommended to start at another school – a special school designed for pupils who had missed a massive chunk of school. And, crucially, they offered a one-year course to do up to eight GCSEs. This school would give me the opportunity to not let the past year control the timeline of my life. I didn’t want to go back a year, redo year 10, and draw out the time I let my pain define me. I was terrified at the idea of going, but I desperately wanted to make something of my life.

Dad took me for the first day at this new school. It was only for an hour. My main person of contact, Billie (all staff members are known by their first name), has an airy office with squishy sofas and a jungle mural. I painted a big purple flower in my first session. On the second day Mum drove me, and I told her to wait outside for 20 minutes in case I changed my mind. The hour-long session flew by. Billie is an incredibly warm, open person and made me comfortable.

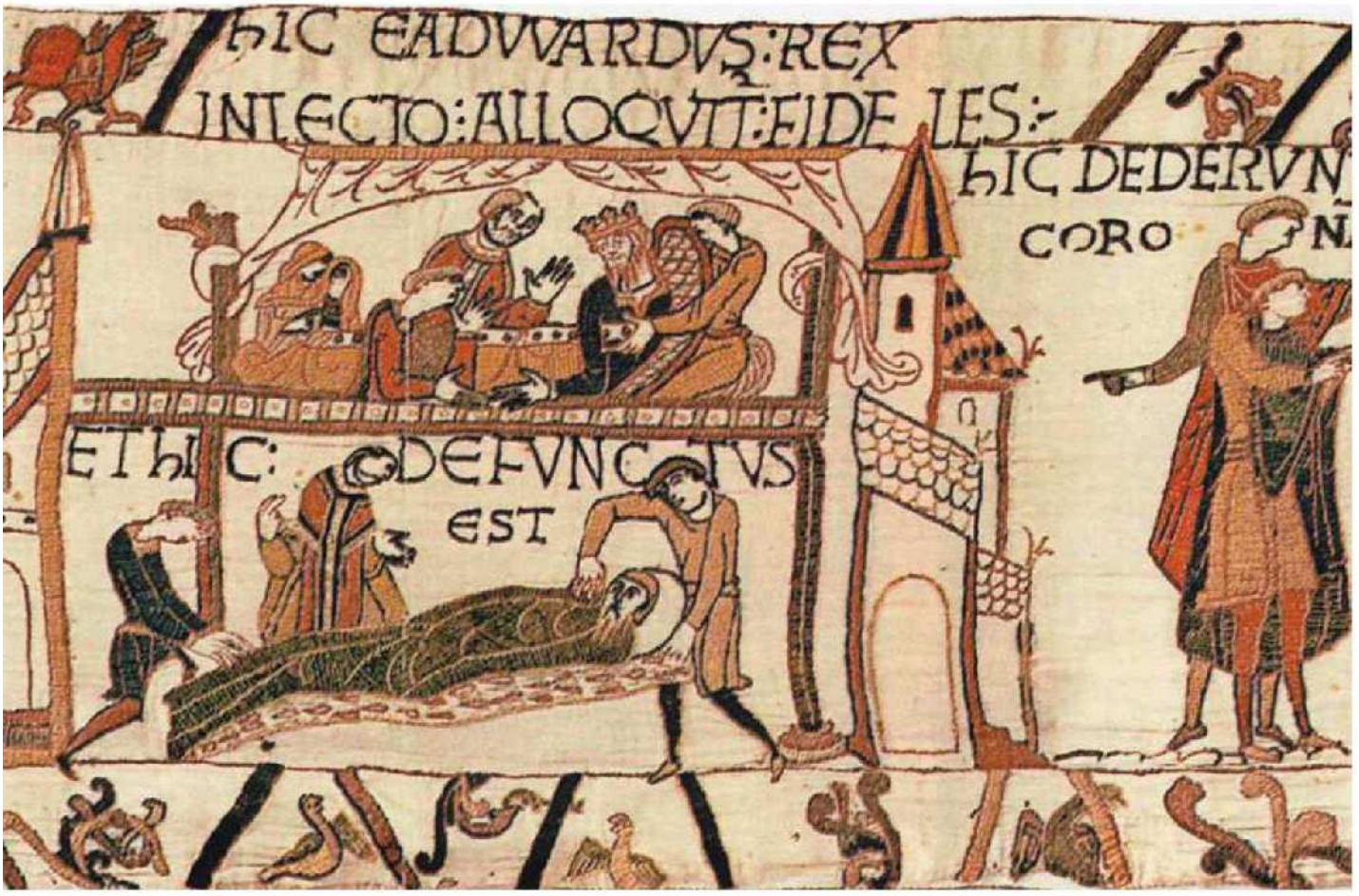
I came back a few days later for another one-on-one session. And soon I was due to go upstairs. I summoned so much bravery to walk up the stairs with Billie. The surreal art on the walls swirled and my mouth felt powdery and dry. “Laila, breathe. We can go down to my office at any time.” Billie could see how scared I was.

There were only three other pupils that day. There are only about ten pupils in the whole school. It doesn’t feel like a school building; it feels like a house. I found it hard to contend with how this was the environment I needed to learn in.

Since then I have been going rather regularly for an hour or so each day, adjusting to having a routine. It feels hard but exhilarating. The more I went to this new school, the more I slowly started to feel hopeful. I said this one night to my parents at dinner, and I think we all had wet eyes. I looked at sixth form websites, going over topic combinations. I had common ground with my friends – I felt like I could sink my claws into life again. I felt so much stronger than ever before, even though I was so scared.

My teachers and fellow pupils are all generous, kind, intelligent people. My head teacher said to me last week, “Don’t compare yourself, Laila – you know, everyone is on a different path.” His words are indelibly burnt into my head. I don’t need to be “better”. I can have bad days and still be doing well.

Looking forward now to September, I want to be the person I know I can be. I don’t feel like I am solved, or fixed, or that I can give my No 1 magic tip to rid you of all anxiety. But I’m proud of how strong I’ve had to be and how well I know myself. The other day I had an art lesson where we were told to start thinking about themes. I knew I wanted to focus on my fears. I came home and started painting. My dad asked me what I was feeling. I looked up at him and said, “I feel hopeful and excited for the future.” ■



THE BRITS BEHIND THE BAYEUX BLOCKBUSTER

Preparing to pack up the Bayeux Tapestry for transfer to the British Museum. Top: a scene from the tapestry

Without Michael Lewis, the great masterpiece would probably not have made it to Britain. He's the only non-French member on the Bayeux Tapestry committee and badgered France to allow it to cross the channel. Together with his impressive co-curator, Millie Horton-Insch, he reveals how they created the British Museum's show of the century. Just don't ask them for tickets!
By Alice Thomson

Millie Horton-Insch, 30, and Michael Lewis, 53, photographed by Jude Edginton at the British Museum

PREVIOUS AND THIS SPREAD: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES

At 2.48am on July 10 the gates opened and a yellow lorry turned into the loading bay of the British Museum, its reverse beeping shattering the silence. After nearly 1,000 years the Bayeux Tapestry had finally come home, slipping under the Channel by train, before being escorted through the fields of Kent in the dead of night by two police cars. The spectacular medieval work of art was carefully wheeled down the ramp, 68 metres of exquisite embroidery folded neatly into a crate.

"Welcome back," said the curator Michael Lewis, who had been waiting for this moment for two decades. "I'd been dreaming of the day," he tells me two weeks later as we survey the linen and wool tapestry, now unfurled flat in the Sainsbury Exhibitions gallery and shrouded in sheets. Every few metres a horse's head rears, a lance plunges, a dog howls or a ghostly ship emerges, as the team of French and British conservationists work in pairs in silence, bent over, checking each ancient stitch for any new blemish.

The British first asked for the loan of the tapestry to mark Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, says Lewis. Then the late Queen Mother angled to borrow it to commemorate the 900th anniversary

'THIS TOOK MORE YEARS TO DELIVER THAN THE BREXIT TALKS,' SAID MACRON

in 1966; the British pleaded again in 1972 and 1980, but to no avail. "The French were determined never to let it go."

Professor Lewis, until recently head of portable antiquities and treasure at the museum, who has devoted his academic career to the tapestry, became obsessed; badgering France to allow the masterpiece to return to its birthplace for a brief visit. Just as he thought he was making progress, catastrophe struck with Brexit; the furious French would now never agree. But instead of preventing the loan, President Macron and King Charles saw it as a diplomatic way to stitch the two countries together again with these fragile threads of soft power. At an Anglo-French summit in 2018, Emmanuel Macron hinted to Theresa May, post Boris Johnson, his nemesis, that there may yet be a French exchange. Then the pandemic happened and negotiations were put on hold. "It was devastating," says Lewis. "I thought we had lost it for ever."

As the only non-French member allowed to sit on the Bayeux Tapestry scientific committee, Lewis saw his chance when the Bayeux Museum, where the tapestry has been housed since it was removed in the last century from the cathedral, needed to be closed for renovations before the 1,000th anniversary of William the Conqueror's birth in 2027. "I proposed the loan as a possibility when the tapestry would need to be stored somewhere," says Lewis. "Why not Britain?" Arnaud Daret, the computer engineer who digitalised the tapestry, has joined us. "This Englishman, he would not stop going on about it," he says, laughing.

The British embassy in Paris took up the cause. The French culture minister, Rachida Dati, was intrigued. Finally last May, Dati summoned Sir Chris Bryant, her counterpart, to her hotel at the Cannes Film Festival. "You must go down on bended knee and propose it to me," she told him. "Then you can have the tapestry."

The Bayeux Tapestry after all is the victor's tale, stitched by the war's victims. It's the story of William, Duke of Normandy's subjugation of the Anglo-Saxons; the last time the British Isles were conquered, after the Normans massacred King Harold's army at Hastings, burning homes, raping, pillaging and constructing castles from the rubble. It portrays

ambition, betrayal, honour and treachery.

For the British, this is foremost a tale of humiliation. But 1066 is also the most famous date of this island's story, and the tapestry shows the spirit of the subjugated, their resilience and humour, as well as the skill of the women who wove the history together for their conquering masters. Bryant decided it was worth grovelling. But Dati wanted to know what France would receive in return. Initially, the French suggested the Rosetta Stone, originally stolen by Napoleon from Egypt, and now residing at the British Museum. That would have been too contentious. It's the Egyptians' Elgin Marbles.

Then the British Museum offered the more blingy, showy seventh-century Sutton Hoo hoard with all its gold, and the medieval Lewis chessmen, while pointing out that only they had a gallery large enough to display the tapestry full-length. The Victoria and Albert Museum didn't stand a chance.

"This took more years to deliver than the Brexit talks," said Macron as he finalised the deal. Suddenly Lewis, now 53, was told the museum had less than a year to arrange the blockbuster show of this generation. He rushed to France to watch the 11th-century relic being folded up, concertina-like between sheets of cotton, to minimise friction, and sent to a secret location in its climate-controlled crate before beginning its 325-mile journey to London in an adapted lorry that could absorb every bump and pothole.

Before it left French shores, in 2020, experts had ascertained there were 24,204 stains and candle wax drips, 9,646 holes and 30 tears in the work. The tapestry features 623 men, 190 horses, 37 ships, 35 dogs, camels, peacocks and wolves, as well as the famous 93 or 94 penises, but only six women. It has already survived the French Revolution, centuries of moth larvae, and Napoleon and the Nazis parading it as a propaganda tool to promote their own planned invasions of Britain. The codebreakers at Bletchley Park and the men and women of the Resistance thwarted Heinrich Himmler's attempts to take it to Germany near the end of the Second World War.

But could it survive the trip to London? The UK government had to indemnify the artefact for £800 million against not just coffee spills but theft, fire, earthquakes and an aircraft collision. The French are thought to have indemnified Sutton ➨

Visitors, some in uniform, view the tapestry at the Louvre in Paris, December 1944. Above: William of Normandy

Hoo for £1.2 billion. Igor Tulchinsky, a Belarusian-American hedge fund magnate worth an estimated $1.7 billion, is sponsoring the exhibition. While adults will pay up to £33 to enter, schoolchildren and the under-16s will go free.

One hundred museum employees lowered the tapestry into a specially designed display case from Ghent in Belgium, allowing it to be displayed horizontally and at its full length for the first time in nearly a millennium, overseen by the new French culture minister, Catherine Pégard. Her staff are checking every inch for recent damage. "It's like returning a hire car," says Daret, who knows every blemish having transferred the tapestry online at the University of Caen. "We need to ensure there are no new scratches or tears."

Daret grew up near the Bayeux Museum in Normandy, and would visit the tapestry every rainy weekend, but even he is stunned by the British mania. "It's mad, in France 1066 and the Bayeux Tapestry are not so important. We have our French Revolution and our *Mona Lisa*." In Britain, Lewis hopes it will be like the British Museum's Tutankhamun exhibition in 1972 which drew 1.7 million visitors, or the display of the Terracotta Warriors in 2007, seen by 850,000 people.

Lewis explains there will be tea towels, scarves, jigsaw puzzles, Liberty cushions, a special tea by Fortnum & Mason; there is even a Greggs "Ta-Pastry", an eight-metre embroidery created to celebrate National Sausage Roll Day and the original's return.

More than 100,000 tickets were sold in 24 hours. "It's been like Glastonbury," Lewis says, with half a million logging on at 9am the first day tickets went on sale. In a few weeks' time, King Charles and President Macron will open the exhibition together.

As he comes to the end of his presidency, Macron sees this final accord as a tangible expression of friendship and a future together. "What better symbol could there be than this age-old embroidery, whose threads stretch back to the very origins of our unique relationship, of the alliance between Churchill and De Gaulle," he told reporters, misty-eyed. "It is the story of two nations who recognise what sets them apart, but who also recognise their natural affinity and what they can achieve when they join forces."

Surveying the tapestry in its temporary home for the first time, Lord Ricketts, the UK's special envoy for the tapestry (it has its own representative now) arrived already wearing his Bayeux Tapestry tie. The current culture secretary, Lisa Nandy, reminisced about feeling sick from drinking too much hot chocolate when she went to Bayeux as a school child.

GETTY IMAGES, ALAMY

Nicholas Cullinan, the museum's director, rechristened it the Canterbury Embroidery but has promised to hand it back. "We feel so lucky to be able to look after it for a year," he told the French, diplomatically. "Such a loan will only happen once and never again," Philippe Bélaval, France's special envoy, insists. Only George Osborne, the BM chairman, was joking. "So, someone's sitting on the throne, and someone wants to take it from him. What's changed?"

The tapestry depicts political intrigue from nearly a thousand years ago, but it still feels extraordinarily relevant. Not just as a sumptuous piece of art, a cracking medieval cartoon created by Anglo-Saxon embroiderers, depicting magnificent birds and beasts, holy relics, roast meats and sumptuous feasts in glorious reds, mustards, browns and greens. Or merely as a description of the Battle of Hastings, the power struggle and the defeat of Harold Godwinson. But as a depiction of the atrocity of war. There are burly, manic-looking Normans setting fire to homes, families fleeing the wreckage, a woman clinging to her boy's hand, headless men, mutilated bodies, discarded dead, tortured horses rearing in terror, and the astonishing golden image of Halley's comet, 600 years before Edmond Halley calculated its orbit, predicting an endless brutal cycle of chaos, war, upheaval and destruction.

"It's Britain's *Odyssey*, it's *Game of Thrones*, an epic story with drama, romance and death, told with passion, humour and pathos, cruelty and comedy," says Millie Horton-Insch, who at only 30 is co-curating the exhibition with Lewis, and is an expert on art and textiles in the 11th century. This is the precursor to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare, Hogarth and Grayson Perry, depicting everyone from kings to builders play-fighting with spades. "At the start of the tapestry, you have a depiction of ordinary men in the lower border, ploughing their fields, oblivious to the high-level diplomatic discussion above them, living in blissful ignorance. By the end they have been drawn into the bloody battlefield and their mutilated bodies are spat out the other side," says Horton-Insch. "I find that difficult to look at, quite tragic."

Osborne calls the tapestry, "The most recognisable object in our history. The only thing that comes close is Stonehenge and nobody's going to move that any time soon." But it's surprising that the British are quite so drawn to the tapestry when it depicts one of the lowest points of our history: the two-year build-up to the Norman invasion, when William, Duke of Normandy, and Godwinson vied to be the anointed successor of the dying, childless English king Edward the Confessor. The Normans assembled superior ships, troops, weapons, horses, food and wine to cross the channel and conquer their neighbours.

As the historian Tom Holland, a trustee of the museum, says, "Countries usually mark dates that make them look great, like America's signing of the Declaration of Independence. But this is an absolutely calamitous defeat. It's one of the most dramatic stories in English history with these three contenders for the throne, a battle between civilisations where Britain is dragged into the continent."

Yet the tapestry is still shrouded in mystery. Horton-Insch, like Lewis, has been meticulously trying to unravel its origins. Both of them are fascinated by the riddles and contradictions. Why, when and where was it created, by whom and for whom? Were there others? How did it end up in Bayeux, why is the end missing, when was the arrow in Harold's eye inserted, are there 93 or 94 penises? Is there a rape scene or is that cleric's slap a caress? Horton-Insch explains it was sheer luck the tapestry remains intact. "It wasn't made from gold or silk, so no one was tempted to chop it up for capes and bags. For years it was rolled up and forgotten."

Lewis says that the tapestry tells a very edited tale of this pivotal moment of the Middle Ages. "The tapestry concentrates on the binary story of Harold and William, with lots of other elements left out including Harold's fateful dash up to northern England to repel a separate invasion by the Norwegian king Harald Hardrada, before marching his shattered army down to the south coast to fight William."

As such it appears an early piece of French propaganda, making the case for the moral and legal legitimacy of William's claim, but Harold is still treated with dignity. "My theory," Lewis says, "is that the tapestry was commissioned by the victorious Normans, probably William's half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, after the conquest, with a view to winning over the English by showing Harold in a good light."

Horton-Insch is intrigued by the women: just three females are depicted in the 58 scenes in the main body of the

'IT'S BRITAIN'S ODYSSEY, IT'S GAME OF THRONES – AN EPIC STORY'

Workers unload a specially designed crate carrying the tapestry at the British Museum, July 10. Right: Norman cavalry attacking the Anglo-Saxon infantry

tapestry, with three more in the borders among the frolicking animals. "The women who do appear have a symbolic significance out of all proportion to their tiny numbers," she says. "One of the most powerful is Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor, seen grieving at the foot of his deathbed."

The historian Holland agrees. "There is a huge shadow hanging over her role as Edward's wife, which is that she didn't give him a son. So there are all kinds of theories and suspicions as to what was going on in that marriage. She certainly prospered rather well after his death and the collapse of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty."

Another female figure is the mysterious Aelfgyva, the woman being touched by the cleric through a wall. "I think the scene was probably an allusion to an act of sexual transgression that would have been very familiar to 11th-century viewers, but which we just don't know about today," Horton-Insch says. "I have always seen it as a depiction of some kind of sexual assault partly because in the border there is a nude figure in a reflection of the poses of the figures above." The man in the margins has vast genitals and is gesturing obscenely while birds of prey flick their tongues.

When you consider that the tapestry was most likely embroidered by the English women who lived through these tumultuous events, "it becomes a deeply poignant and upsetting image", she says. "So, although only a few women are portrayed, their experiences speak to real tragedies. And to have the victims of war depicted in this sort of way is strangely modern."

Lewis and Horton-Insch's only serious disagreement is about where the tapestry was created. Lewis says many scenes may have been copied from manuscripts in St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury in the late 11th century, making Canterbury the most likely candidate. Horton-Insch sees the hands of the expert seamstresses from Winchester: nuns and noblewomen. "In the 11th century, they were probably stitching it outside, so you're having to wait for good weather as well. And for every hour of embroidery, you would need to spin for four to seven hours to get the thread."

But there is no conclusive evidence who commissioned this souvenir or oversaw it. Was it sewn as a way of uniting the new nation, a peace offering or a prize? The French used to call it *La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde*, suggesting that it was commissioned by William's wife, Matilda, as a gift. Maybe Odo, his brother, ordered it, as bishop of Bayeux, to hang in his cathedral when it was completed in 1077. Yet Lewis says the first record of the tapestry in Bayeux was not until the end of the 15th century, in 1476. Was it locked up in the crypt for centuries?

And what about the arrow in Harold's eye, with the inscription *Hic Harold rex interfectus est*? Lewis and Horton-Insch believe it was inserted after myths of Harold's grisly death began circulating centuries later. "I don't think it was there ever at the beginning. It's just been added in the 19th century because we thought it should be," Lewis suggests.

The argument over the 93 or 94 penises makes the French conservationists laugh; 88 are equine protrusions. "This is a British obsession," they say. The contested penis belongs to a man running with something dangling beneath his tunic.

In the Victorian era, a copy was made that now resides in the Reading Museum. It is almost identical, designed by the patriotic Elizabeth Wardle, the wife of a Staffordshire silk-dyer and stitched by the ladies of the Leek Embroidery Society. "But all the phalluses were covered with stripy underwear to protect everyone's modesty," says Horton-Insch.

Naked figures and penises in the borders were commonplace throughout the medieval period, particularly in manuscripts, Horton-Insch says. "They're often interpreted as a kind of light relief, or the idea that the profane and religious, the sublime and the ridiculous can coexist. I think it's a reflection of the medieval mind that is maybe difficult for us to understand today."

David Musgrove, who co-authored *The Story of the Bayeux Tapestry* with Lewis, says, "I like to think of these curious details on the tapestry borders of being like a Banksy, potentially offering commentary on what's going on in the main action."

The borders are also full of Aesop's animals. My favourite, when I visited the Bayeux Museum as a ten-year-old on a school trip, was a frog attempting to drown a mouse before itself being devoured by a kite. "The eels wriggling in the quicksand are also wonderful. They look particularly sinister," says Horton-Insch.

Both curators have been inundated with requests for tickets. "We've had some pretty audacious attempts," says Horton-Insch. Lewis is overwhelmed by this sudden Bayeuxmania, 20 years after he finished his dissertation on the tapestry.

Do they hope the exhibition will encourage more Millies and Michaels to study history of art and archaeology rather than maths and economics? "I would love to see a bumper crop of people doing PhDs on medieval tapestries in future years," Horton-Insch admits.

The last enigma is the missing finale; the tip of the fabric has now disintegrated having been rolled and unrolled so often. It feels as though we are leaving the film ten minutes before the credits. "No one knows how the tapestry ends," Horton-Insch says. "But that's part of the fun." ■

The Bayeux Tapestry is at the British Museum from September 10 to July 11, 2027 (britishmuseum.org)

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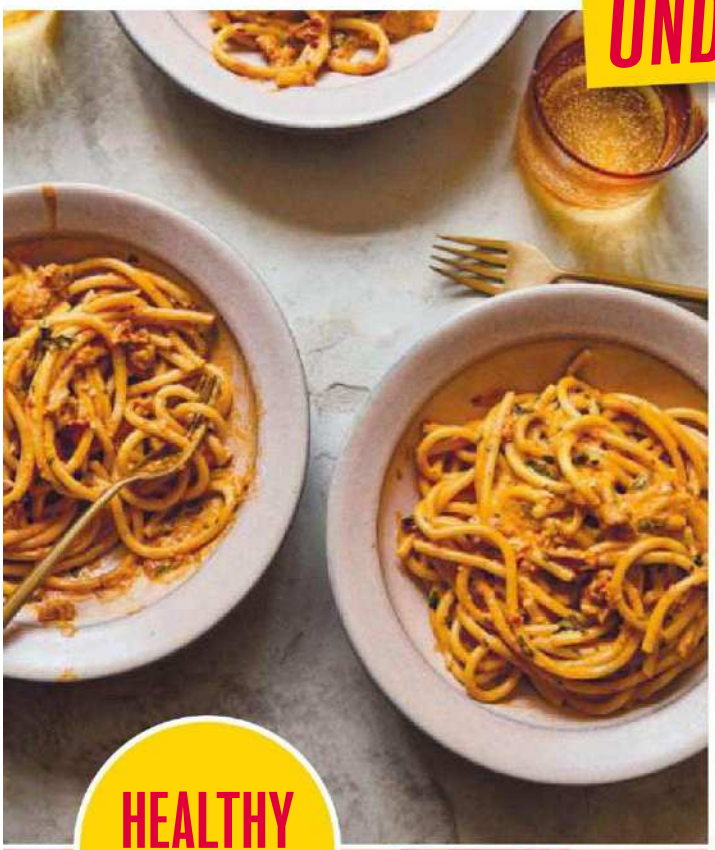

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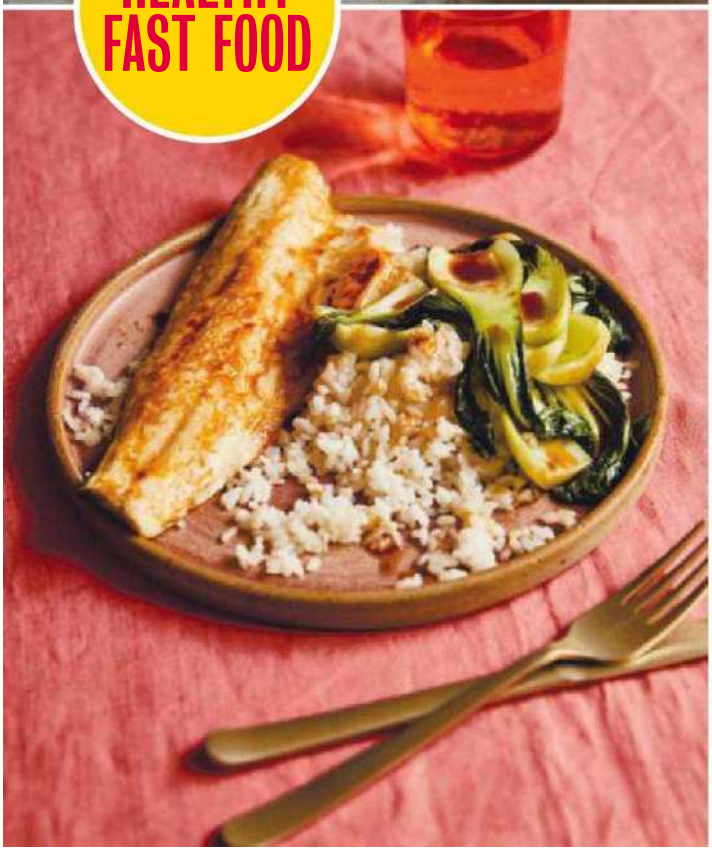


The most desirable midweek meals have always been those that can be on the table in half an hour. Or so you thought. Now the author Zena Kamgaing, 33, is making after-work cooking even easier with her dinners that are ready to eat in just 15 minutes.

In fact, she has filled her debut book, *Dinner Time*, with quick and easy, family-friendly dishes that prove fast food doesn't have to be short of flavour. Building on the innovative versions of international culinary classics she shares on social media, she has created bold and vibrant recipes, packed with herbs and spices.

From curry butter prawns to sticky tamarind salmon, these are speedy, deeply delicious and – best of all – ready in the same amount of time it takes you to lay the table. **Hannah Evans**

1. CURRY BUTTER PRAWNS

Serves 4. Total time: 13 min (page 29)

Juicy prawns are tossed in a velvety sauce spiked with curry spices, garlic and the tomato purée. Perfect with rice, crusty bread or simply on its own.

- **60g butter**
- **30g double-concentrate tomato purée**
- **1 tsp curry powder (mild, medium or hot)**
- **2 garlic cloves, finely grated or minced**
- **500g raw king prawns, deveined, tail-on**
- **1 small handful of fresh coriander, leaves and stems roughly chopped**
- **Lemon wedges, to serve (optional)**

1. Heat a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the butter and cook, stirring occasionally, until it just begins to foam and brown (2-3 minutes).
2. Add the tomato purée and cook, stirring frequently, until it begins to darken (2-3 minutes).
3. Add the curry powder and garlic and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, then add the prawns and toss them to coat them in the sauce. Pour in 60ml of boiling water, stir and cover the pan. Let the prawns steam until cooked through (4-5 minutes).
4. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the coriander. Transfer the prawns to a shallow bowl and serve immediately.

2. HARISSA BUTTER STEAK FLATBREADS

Serves 4. Total time: 11 min

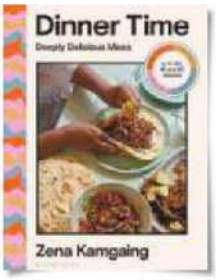
These flatbreads are proof that big flavours do not have to mean long cooking times. Thin-cut steaks cook in seconds, and the harissa butter does all the heavy lifting in the flavour department.

PHOTOGRAPHS
Yuki Sugiura

2

- **150g Greek yoghurt**
- **2 garlic cloves, finely grated or minced**
- **1 small red onion, thinly sliced**
- **1 lemon, juiced**
- **4 vine tomatoes (about 300g), cut into wedges**
- **2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil**
- **4 minute or thin-cut steaks**
- **Vegetable oil (or any neutral oil)**
- **1 heaped tbsp butter**
- **½ tbsp harissa paste**
- **4 small flatbreads**
- **1 small handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves and tender stems chopped**

1. In a small bowl, mix the Greek yoghurt with the garlic and a pinch of salt. Set aside. In another bowl, scrunch the red onion with the lemon juice and a good pinch of salt until softened, then add the tomatoes and olive oil, toss to combine, and set aside.
2. Heat a large nonstick frying pan over a high heat. Pat the steaks dry with kitchen paper, then lightly oil them and season them with salt and pepper. Cook for 1 minute in total, flipping halfway through.
3. Lower the heat to medium and add the butter and harissa. Tilt the pan and spoon the melted harissa butter over the steaks, basting for 30 seconds, then transfer them to a plate to rest for 5 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, warm the flatbreads according to the packet instructions. Slice the rested steaks.



Extract from *Dinner Time* by Zena Kamgaing (Bloomsbury, £22). To order a copy call 020 3176 2935 or go to times bookshop.co.uk

5. Spread the garlicky yoghurt over the warm flatbreads, then layer on the steak and spoon over the buttery harissa drippings from the pan. Scatter some of salad, serving the rest on the side. Finish with a sprinkle of parsley.

3. CREAMY TOMATO AND HARISSA PASTA

Serves 5-6. Total time: 14 min

This was my first viral recipe, amassing more than 15 million views. The dish comes together in minutes. Sundried tomatoes and harissa bring so much flavour, while the mascarpone makes it creamy. The dish takes next to no effort.

- **500g dried pasta of choice**
- **250g mascarpone**
- **200g sundried tomatoes, oil-packed (drained weight)**
- **50g parmigiano reggiano, grated**
- **25g fresh basil**
- **2 heaped tbsp rose harissa paste**
- **1 large garlic clove, roughly chopped**

1. Boil the pasta in plenty of salted water

3

according to the packet instructions, until al dente.
2. Meanwhile, place the mascarpone, sundried tomatoes, parmigiano reggiano, basil, harissa paste, garlic and 120ml of cold water in a food processor. Season lightly with salt and pepper and blitz to form a chunky sauce. Set aside while the pasta finishes cooking.
3. Drain the cooked pasta, reserving a few ladlefuls of the cooking water, and transfer the pasta back into the pot.
4. Add the sauce with a ladleful of the reserved cooking water and toss until the sauce coats the pasta. Add more pasta water as needed. Serve immediately.

4. BUTTERY SOY SEA BASS WITH GARLICKY PAK CHOI

Serves 4. Total time: 15 min

The beauty of this recipe lies in how easily it all comes together. The glaze couldn't be simpler – just kecap manis (a thick, sweet soy sauce) and butter – but it gives the sea bass a rich finish that's salty, sweet and deeply savoury. Meanwhile, the pak choi steams and stir-fries all in one pan with plenty of garlic. Served with rice, this is quick, simple and full of flavour – exactly what you want from a 15-minute dinner.

- **250g white jasmine rice or 500g packet of microwavable sushi rice**

4

- **500g pak choi**
- **2 tbsp kecap manis**
- **1 tbsp melted butter**
- **4 sea bass fillets (or sea bream fillets), skin-on**
- **1 tbsp vegetable oil, plus more for greasing**
- **4 large garlic cloves, finely grated or minced**

1. If you're cooking the rice from scratch, rinse it under cold water using a sieve or colander, then drain it well and tip it into a pot. Add 360ml of cold water and bring it to a simmer over a medium-high heat. Once simmering, cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid, turn the heat down to low and cook the rice for 12 minutes, until the water has been absorbed and the grains are tender. Take the pot off the heat and let the rice sit, covered, for 3 minutes, then fluff it up with a fork. If you're using microwave packet rice, which I recommend here, heat it just before serving.
2. Meanwhile, heat your grill to high. Line a medium baking tray with foil and oil it lightly. Trim the base of the pak choi to separate the leaves. Wash them thoroughly – really get in there – and drain them in a colander. In a small bowl, mix 1 tbsp of the kecap manis with the melted butter and a pinch of salt.
3. Pat the fish fillets dry and lay them skin-side down on the prepared tray. Spread the kecap manis butter evenly over the flesh. Grill the fish for 4-5 minutes, or until caramelised and cooked through.
4. Meanwhile, heat the vegetable oil in a large wok or frying pan over a high heat. Add the garlic, drained pak choi and remaining kecap manis. Toss it all together, cover with a lid and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, for around 2 minutes, or until the pak choi is tender but still vibrant. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then transfer to a bowl.
5. Serve the fish with the garlicky pak choi, plus the rice on the side to soak up all those delicious, savoury juices.

5

5. CRISPY ZA'ATAR SEA BASS WITH JEWELLED GIANT COUSCOUS

Serves 4. Total time: 12 min

This is my favourite way to cook sea bass fillets – seared in a hot pan until the skin is perfectly crisp. The seasoning is simple: just za'atar and salt and pepper. You could serve the fish with almost anything, but here I've paired it with a giant couscous salad, tossed in a lemony harissa dressing.

For the giant couscous

- **200g giant couscous**
- **2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil**
- **2 tsp harissa paste**
- **1 tsp runny honey**
- **½ lemon, juiced**
- **1 garlic clove, finely grated or minced**
- **½ red romano pepper (or regular red pepper), deseeded and finely diced**
- **100g baby cucumber, finely diced**
- **100g pomegranate seeds**
- **1 small handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves and tender stems finely chopped**

For the sea bass

- **4 sea bass fillets, skin-on**
- **1 tbsp za'atar**
- **Vegetable oil (or any neutral oil), for frying**

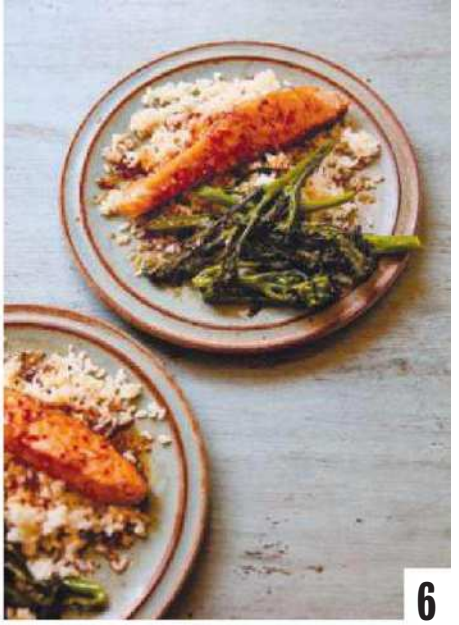
1. Boil the giant couscous in generously salted water according to the packet instructions, until tender. Drain, rinse under cold water, then drain again.
2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together the olive oil, harissa paste, honey, lemon juice and garlic. Add the red pepper, cucumber, pomegranate seeds and parsley, then season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Tip in the drained couscous, toss everything together again and season with more salt and pepper, to taste, if needed. Set aside.
3. Pat the sea bass fillets dry with kitchen paper. Season the flesh side with the za'atar, plus a little salt and pepper. Flip and pat the skin dry again, then season lightly with salt.
4. Heat a large nonstick frying pan over a medium-high heat and add a thin layer of vegetable oil. Once hot, place the fillets skin-side down. Press down gently with a spatula for the first 15 seconds to stop the skin curling. Cook the fish for 2-3 minutes, or until the skin is golden and crispy, then flip and cook for 1 minute, until cooked through.
5. Serve each with a portion of the crispy sea bass, skin-side up

6. STICKY TAMARIND SALMON WITH ROASTED LONG STEM BROCCOLI

Serves 4. Total time: 15 min

Tamarind is sharp, tangy and zingy, and worth adding to your storecupboard arsenal. Here, it's mixed with fish sauce, sugar and garlic to make a glaze to coat the salmon. Paired with rice and roasted long stem broccoli, it makes for a very delicious dinner. I roast the broccoli in an air fryer for speed, but in an oven allow for an extra 5-7 minutes of cooking time.

- **250g white jasmine rice or 500g packet of microwavable sushi rice**
- **330g long stem broccoli**



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- **2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil**
- **1½ tsp chilli flakes**
- **3-4 tbsp sugar**
- **2 tbsp fish sauce**
- **2 tbsp tamarind paste**
- **2 garlic cloves, finely grated or minced**
- **Vegetable oil (or any neutral oil)**
- **4 salmon fillets**

1. If you're cooking the rice from scratch, rinse it under cold water using a sieve or colander, then drain it well and tip it into a pot. Add 360ml of water and bring it to a simmer over a medium-high heat. Once simmering, cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid, turn the heat down to low and cook the rice for 12 minutes, until the water has been absorbed and the grains are tender. Take the pot off the heat and let the rice sit, covered, for 3 minutes, then fluff it up with a fork. If you're using microwave packet rice, which I recommend here, heat it up just before serving.
2. Meanwhile, heat your air fryer to 180C. Trim the broccoli and split any thicker stalks lengthways so they all cook evenly.
3. Toss the broccoli with the olive oil, ½ tsp chilli flakes and a good pinch of salt and pepper. Transfer the broccoli to the air-fryer basket, making sure not to overcrowd it, and air-fry for 5-6 minutes, or until the broccoli is tender and slightly charred.
4. In a small bowl, combine the sugar, fish sauce, tamarind paste, remaining chilli flakes, garlic and 100ml of cold water.
5. Heat a tsp or two of vegetable oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Place the salmon fillets skin-side down and cook for 3 minutes, or until browned. Flip and cook for another minute, then turn each fillet on to one side and cook for 1 minute. Repeat for the other side.
6. Pour in the tamarind sauce and let it bubble away, basting the salmon as the sauce thickens. After 2-3 minutes, the sauce should be clinging to the fillets. Serve the salmon with the broccoli and a side of rice. ■

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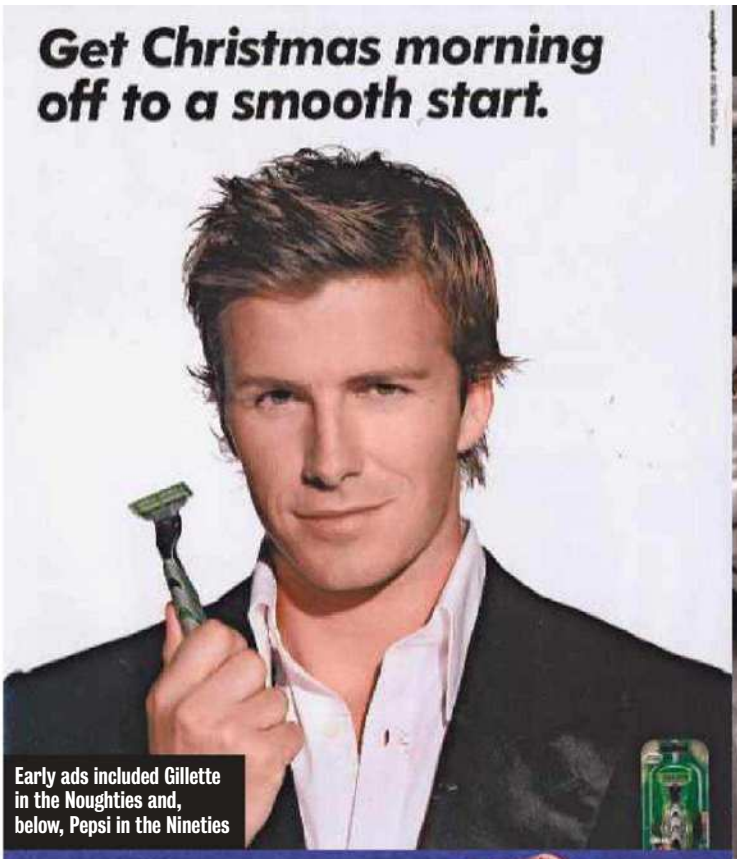


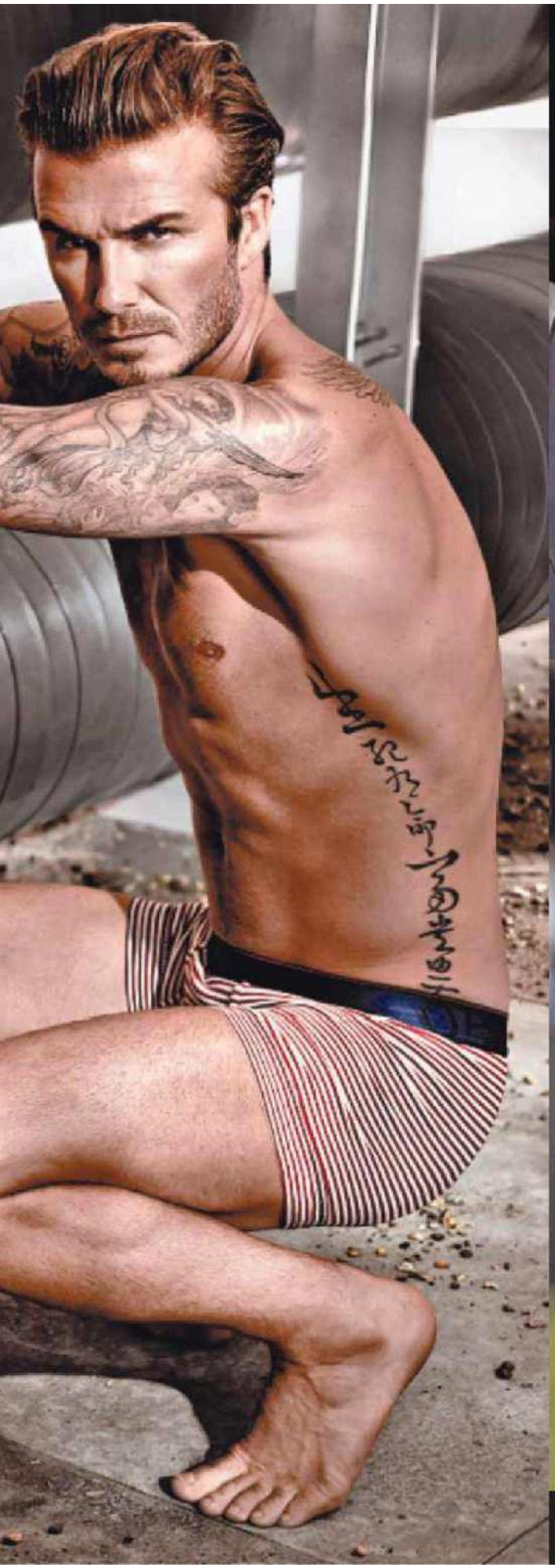
Early ads included Gillette in the Noughties and, below, Pepsi in the Nineties

Starring in a campaign for H&M

BANK IT LIKE BECKHAM

HOW GOLDENBALLS BECAME A BILLIONAIRE

Ignore that bitter family feud and 2026 has been the best year yet for Brand Beckham. Deals with Pepsi, Armani and Adidas and the success of his Inter Miami team have made the boy from Chingford a money-spinning juggernaut. And 2027 could be even more lucrative. Alison Boshoff reports



At the One Year to Go celebrations for the 2022 Qatar World Cup in Doha

With Inter Miami player Lionel Messi at a match in Florida, 2025

When David Beckham appeared on the jumbotron screens during the Fifa World Cup, the vast crowds roared at the sight of this hero of football, watching on in a suit from the VIP balcony.

In other circumstances, you might have expected the Prince of Wales, the patron of the Football Association, but instead we had Beckham, born to an ordinary family in Leytonstone, east London, whose gas fitter father once had to borrow £130 to send him to summer football camp.

His son is now an icon and a billionaire – in dollars – according to Forbes magazine, and according to The Sunday Times Rich List worth £1.185 billion if you add in the assets of his Spice Girl turned fashion designer wife, Victoria. His Major League Soccer (MLS) football club, Inter Miami, is itself said to be worth £2.5 billion.

It is no exaggeration to say that Beckham's media domination of the World Cup was nearly total, with global TV campaigns for Home Depot, Ninja Kitchen, Stella Artois, Pepsi, Verizon, Bank of America, Lay's, Walkers and McDonald's. As a writer for the US website sportico.com wrote, "If the commercial breaks are anything to go by, the face of American soccer isn't the player who wears the No 10 shirt for the national team, but a 51-year-old English bloke."

In personal terms, Beckham may be glad to see the back of 2026 – a year that has been dominated by his family's public fallout with its eldest son, Brooklyn – but financially it is set to be his most lucrative year yet, with estimates of more than £100 million income in just 12 months. And although this year's record-breaking tally was partly due to a "World Cup bump", Beckham's team believe that next year's total commercial income could reach £125 million.

It was the former Spice Girls manager Simon Fuller who believed that the Beckhams could conquer America. The man who was instrumental in the pair meeting back in 1997 was also the one with the vision to recognise the enormous potential of the couple – a pop star and a fashion-conscious footballer – whom he turned into a mighty, money-spinning force.

Fuller started to work for 29-year-old Beckham at the start of his time at the Spanish club Real Madrid. His view was that Beckham – whose early contracts had included a £200,000 deal to promote Brylcreem and a four-year £800,000 boot contract with Adidas, and was making about £5 million a year in brand endorsements – should be earning double that.

Soon, he secured a £40 million deal with the razor giant Gillette, including £3 million upfront. It was also linked to Beckham's nascent football academy project, which meant that he could legitimately ensure Real Madrid didn't see any of the money (despite the clause in its contract with him entitling it to a percentage of some commercial deals).

Fuller introduced Beckham to a succession of accountants and wealth management experts, including those who set up the Ingenious films investment scheme which, in 2013, led to HMRC raising a red flag over his tax status, delaying the conferring of the knighthood he so craved.

For now, the tax status was simple: Beckham was a "non dom" – not domiciled in the UK. By moving to Spain he escaped British taxes on all profits earned outside Britain. His accountants made sure that profits earned in Britain were kept, entirely legally, surprisingly low.

He also benefited from what was dubbed "Beckham's law", a special Spanish exemption reducing income tax for foreigners from 47 to 24 per cent. No wonder Beckham wasn't seriously tempted by offers to play in the UK after he was ready to leave Real Madrid four years later.

He was now moving from the "star player" era to the "global icon" era and the scale and frequency of the deals changed with it. His estimated annual income in 2003 was £18 million, including the £92,000 a week that Real Madrid was paying him.

2003
Adidas
£115m

Beckham signed deals with Pepsi, Marks & Spencer and Police sunglasses. One was a new endorsement with Adidas, for a lifetime deal, and worth about £115 million – a far cry from that sub-million contract he had signed in 1996. He was now the highest-paid footballer in the world.

In 2005 he was offered a new contract by Real Madrid. This set his salary at £4.6 million and would give him up to £7 million more from shirt sales. The deal seemed sweet enough, and Victoria had now finally moved to Madrid with their children, but a future away from Europe was already being considered.

Fuller had struck up an association with Tim Leiweke of the Anschutz Entertainment Group. Leiweke, who was involved in the Major League Soccer scene, had been introduced to Beckham and wanted him to come and play for his team, LA Galaxy. It took three years to make that a reality.

Not only did Beckham have to be persuaded to move to MLS, where football was played at a far lesser level than in Europe – endangering his ability to keep playing for England – he also had to accept a substantial pay cut. Some believed that his new salary was worth only about £5 million a year, a 70 per cent drop on the money that he had brought in at Real Madrid.

With his business partner, Simon Fuller, in 2005

OILED UP AND IN WHITE BRIEFS, HE BOOSTED ARMANI SALES BY 94 PER CENT

So why sign? The 2007 deal put Beckham exactly where he needed to be to become a global superstar: America. It also included the right to buy an MLS "expansion team", meaning a new team in a sports league, for a discounted price of $25 million. This was little remarked on at the time, but proved arguably the most significant agreement he signed and is the key to his current riches.

Focused on money, Fuller appeared blasé about the potential effect on Beckham's sporting career. "We could have stayed at Real Madrid and done another three years, but David has already won everything in club football in Europe," he said. "So he wins another league title. So what? Really, what is the worst that can happen for David's career?"

But Beckham struggled to settle down with LA Galaxy. He didn't get on with the players, who earned a fraction of his pay. When they went out for a getting to know you dinner, they were stunned to find that Beckham was not intending to pick up the bill. He was abused by the

PREVIOUS SPREAD: ALAMY, H&M, GETTY IMAGES. THIS SPREAD: GETTY IMAGES

At the England v Norway World Cup quarter-final with Victoria and children Harper and Romeo

fans, and every time he stepped on the pitch he was expected to single-handedly ensure a victory.

Beckham's dissatisfaction was such that he ended up going out on loan to AC Milan in 2009 and 2010 in a desperate bid to prolong his England prospects. Both times Victoria and the children stayed behind in LA, and those years proved remarkably happy ones for the rest of the family.

The paparazzi intrusion was less intense – as people hadn't a clue who they were – the family lived an outdoorsy lifestyle of hiking and swimming, and home was a 13,000-plus sq ft, six-bedroom, nine-bathroom house on a 1.25-acre site in the so-called Golden Triangle of Beverly Hills, above Sunset Boulevard.

Victoria's parents, Tony and Jackie, lived with them for much of the year and helped to look after their sons, Brooklyn, Romeo and Cruz, while Victoria travelled. David's mum, Sandra, also spent long periods of time there.

As for David, he enjoyed LA's nightlife culture, having got a taste for late nights when in Madrid. By 2009, he was being spotted fairly regularly in Villa Lounge and Hyde nightclubs with celebrity friends. Aged 33, he had also never been sexier. Take his 2008 campaign for Armani underwear. Oiled up and in a pair of white briefs, he caused a sensation, boosting sales by an astonishing 94 per cent. Victoria quipped that she loved seeing her husband's crotch on a 25ft billboard.

"It's all his! It's like a tractor exhaust pipe," she said.

2004
Gillette
£40m

Advertisers tripped over themselves to be associated with his model face and muscular body, and were impressed by his facility in front of the camera, as Beckham consistently delivered in front of the lens. The photographer Nadav Kander said, "He was much more interested in how to hold himself than I've ever found with a sportsman before."

Delighted to be dubbed "metrosexual", he cultivated relationships with magazine editors and was the first man to be on the cover of Marie Claire and Elle. An associate said, "He would spend hours thinking about exactly what clothes to be seen in, how they would photograph and how the photographs should be taken."

Beckham's 2011 underwear collaboration with H&M, sold in more than 40 countries, cemented his place as a global advertising star. The advert was broadcast to two billion fans during the prestigious Super Bowl commercial spot. "It was transformational. David had arrived on a global scale," Fuller said.

In January 2025, Fuller also revealed, "It was my singular focus to build a brand for David that transcended where he came from and spoke to people all over the world. To go global, you have to touch pop culture and define the times you live in. It's not random or a mistake; it's precision, focus and planning ahead."

Beckham fully understood what was being done. A source who has worked with him says, "He doesn't have a good education, but he is very tenacious and has very good instincts. He's certainly not stupid."

The commercial mission was a success, but the same could not be said of Beckham's football in the early years. In 2008, LA Galaxy came second from bottom in the league. He braved the hostility of the club's coach, Bruce Arena, to take up an option to play for a few months with AC Milan. He was desperate to impress Fabio Capello, then in charge of England. Going to Italy on loan meant missing Brooklyn's and Cruz's birthdays, but at this point his England ambitions came first.

He did manage to get one final cap for England in a World Cup qualifier against Belarus on October 14, 2009, when he came on as a substitute – his 115th cap. It made him the most capped outfield player at the time. He was not picked again.

His final few months of professional football were played at the Qatari-backed club Paris Saint-Germain. Beckham lived in the Hotel Bristol in Paris in a suite that cost £21,000 a night and donated his entire income to a French children's hospital charity. The press raved about his big heart, but there were advantages to the arrangement: it meant that he could keep his non-dom status for tax purposes until the start of the new financial year in April 2013. He also avoided France's swingeing 75 per cent "supertax" for millionaires, which was in force at the time.

2012
Armani
£20m

The end of his England career in 2009, and his eventual retirement from professional football in 2013, were complemented by rocketing commercial activities. The Armani association – that 2008 pants advert – flowered into a full-on fashion endorsement worth £20 million in 2012.

There were David Beckham ranges at H&M from 2011 until 2017. In 2011 he also signed a three-year deal as an Active Kids ambassador for Sainsbury's worth £5 million. He endorsed Breitling watches from 2012 to 2013 and Tudor from 2017.

The best of these deals were more than just him lending his likeness: a venture with the British tailor Kent & Curwen guaranteed one of Beckham's companies 5 per cent of net retail sales and 10 per cent of net wholesale sales related to his involvement.

"Beckham has evolved from being a sponsored individual to an equity owner," said Steve Martin, the former chief executive of M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment. "He's been ahead of the game, which comes from very, very, very good advice from people around him."

Businesses in the Far East were a focus. Beckham signed a deal to partner with the insurance giant AIA, plugged Jaguar ➡

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cars in China and was under contract to the Chinese Super League, which gave him an estimated £50 million to promote its football globally. There was a five-year deal with China Auto Rental Holdings and an immense deal with the Las Vegas hotel and casino giant Sands to help to promote its businesses in Singapore and Macau.

Most of Sands's revenue comes from gambling, a world reported to contain customers engaging in money laundering and plutocrats who enjoy the varied services of bar girls. Beckham and his advisers apparently didn't blink before accepting.

Likewise, nobody seemed to hesitate over his ten-year deal to be a Fifa ambassador for Qatar, starting with being a figurehead for the controversial 2022 World Cup. Despite the regime's repressive outlawing of homosexuality – and Beckham's status as a gay icon – he was happy to take the money, said to stand at £15 million a year.

There were occasional flops. His own grooming range, House 99, wasn't a money-spinner as expected, even though it was launched in partnership with the well-established giant L'Oréal. The subscription digital platform Otro, which he co-founded in 2018, never took off. And, after nine years, he parted ways with the whisky brand Haig Club in 2023. There was talk that some at Diageo, which owned the label, weren't thrilled by his involvement with Qatar.

There was also a reverse in 2014, when Beckham entered into a deal with the Global Brands entrepreneur Bruce Rockowitz. The Global Brands group made and sold products for Disney, Calvin Klein and Kate Spade. The idea was that the company would develop the Beckham brand across a wide range of consumer products and Beckham agreed to sell them 51 per cent of Beckham Brand Holdings for $36.7 million. Rockowitz predicted sales would soar, but revenues at Beckham Brand Holdings dropped by 18 per cent in 2018 and it registered a £1.6 million loss. The Global Brands group eventually went bust in 2021.

Meanwhile, Beckham was growing weary of paying Fuller's commission, which stood at about 30 per cent by now. "After a while with Simon Fuller I thought, I can do this myself," he said.

Fuller was eventually ousted in 2019, all insisted amicably, but plenty of lawyers were involved. Those close to the parting of ways say that Beckham had become sick and tired of how much money Fuller was making from him. The price of freedom? It cost £38 million to buy back Fuller's 33 per cent stake in Beckham Brand Holdings.

With Fuller out of the picture, Beckham went on to sell a 55 per cent stake in his holding company,

Celebrating Inter Miami's 2025 championship win with Victoria

GETTY IMAGES

'I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD HAVE THE SAME FEELING AS AN OWNER AS I HAD AS A PLAYER'

David Beckham Ventures, to the Authentic Brands Group. Authentic – which, along with more than 50 consumer brands including Reebok, Guess, Brooks Brothers and Juicy Couture, also owns the likeness rights or estates of celebrities including Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and Muhammad Ali, and whose reported global retail sales last year were $36 billion – offered a "strategic partnership" under which it would co-own and manage his brand. For this he got $200 million in cash and $69 million in shares.

This was crucial because the money from Authentic was needed to get Inter Miami off the ground. (And while Beckham concentrated on that task, deals were done with Hugo Boss, Nespresso, Tempur mattresses, AliExpress, SharkNinja air fryers, Stella Artois and PerfectDraft beer.)

Under the terms of the agreement, the club had to start playing by 2020 or the franchise would be withdrawn. There were problems with finding a place to play, or even a suitable site to develop. However, the club's fortunes were transformed by one incredible stroke: the signing of seven-times Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi. When he joined in 2023 – the highest earner in the MLS on a guaranteed £15.2 million a year – it ushered in a new era. The team won the Leagues Cup in 2023, the Supporters' Shield in 2024 and the MLS Cup for the first time in December 2025. Xavier Asensi, the club's president of business operations, said, "If you take broadcast out of [total] revenues, we are No 17 in the world." He added: "Leo is the catalyst, or the one that allowed these to flourish."

It is beyond dispute that Messi joining was down to Beckham, who flew to Barcelona in 2019 to speak with Messi's father and agent, Jorge. "We sneaked into a hotel, met Jorge Messi and started the conversation," he said. "It purely went, 'We would love your son to play for our team one day. We know he can't come yet, but one day we would love to have Leo in Miami.'"

He added: "I never thought I would have the same feeling as an owner as I had when I was a player. When I got the phone call [to confirm Messi was joining], I had the feeling I had when I walked out at Old Trafford or Wembley."

The signing was naturally a part of discussions when, later in 2023, Beckham was a guest speaker at Harvard Business School. Anita Elberse, a professor of business administration, had invited him to join her class. She wrote on Instagram: "Yes, you're seeing it right: the legendary @davidbeckham was a guest speaker in my @HarvardHBS MBA class today. So amazing to hear him share his thoughts on topics such as his soccer career, his joint venture with Authentic Brands Group and, of course, Lionel Messi and Inter Miami CF."

"His is a Hollywood story," his friend Tom Cruise said in June as he presented Beckham with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. "A boy who believed in something bigger than himself." Indeed, Beckham did: the mighty dollar. ■

Alison Boshoff is editor at large at the Daily Mail and the author of Brand Beckham: The Fame. The Feuds. The Fallout *(Century, £22), published on August 13. Order from timesbookshop.co.uk. Special discount for Times+ members*

My mum died when I was a child. Dad remarried after nine months.

He was 53. His new wife was 23. She shot him five years later.

Now I'm a star of OrphanTok – the tragedy TikTokers who go viral

Eva Benefield has 200,000 followers and a thriving business for being 'the Black Swan murder girl', posting videos about losing both her parents. She tells Will Pavia what happened – and how she survived

Eva Benefield photographed by Aaron Richter at the Warren Street Hotel, New York

Eva Benefield sometimes calls herself the chief executive of "OrphanTok": the community of young people on TikTok who make videos about losing their parents. She is very good at it and not averse to cracking a few jokes about her father's murder. She posted one not long after his death. "I remember waking up and I was at, I think, a million or two million views," she says. "It's hard for people to wrap their heads around it, I think. I'm just a blonde girl from Charleston. You wouldn't think, oh, she's in the middle of a true crime episode."

Benefield leans back on a patterned blue sofa, legs crossed, beneath a hotel room window that looks out into the towers of Lower Manhattan. She is tanned and blonde and 25, dressed like a chic surfer, in a white blouse and khaki trousers. Around her neck is a long, thin wire necklace with small blue beads strung along it like floats on a fishing line. She has blue eyes and teeth that are very white, against her beach and sun-burnished skin.

"My mom died when I was 14 and then nine months later my dad remarried a 23-year-old," Benefield said in a recent TikTok video. "And then five years later, the woman that my dad remarried shot and killed him." The killing, in September 2020, and subsequent trial in 2024, became a headline-generating case known as the Black Swan murder.

Benefield has thought a lot about how to tell her story. She thought it could be a film, akin to *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the murder story set in the coastal marshes of the Carolinas. "That's my childhood. The Lowcountry and the marsh, the ocean. I think it's very cinematic," she says. "Everybody I spoke to said, 'You need a book first so you can really have your story fleshed out.'"

So she has produced a memoir. *Ghost Girl* is written in the mordant but confiding voice of a wise teenager who is going through the mill, like Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* or David Eggers in *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. But sped up a little, for the TikTok era, where you have to make your pitch in three seconds.

"When I was 19 my dad was shot and killed by his swimsuit model/ballerina bride, who was 30 years his junior and the craziest psycho bitch in the microgreens aisle at Whole Foods," she writes in the first line of the book. "Soon the bottom feeders were everywhere," it continues. "I was awash in tabloid gore. One minute I was a normal freshman at the College of Charleston studying art and the next minute, I was a circus freak."

There are several Benefields in this story so it might be easier, from here on out, to call her Eva. Eva grew up in Mount Pleasant, a suburb across the water from Charleston, South Carolina. She was a "borderline tomboy", keen on surfing and fishing. There were two older stepbrothers from her mother's previous marriage but both had left home by the time she was 12. Her mother, Renee, was a chatty, scatty, "gorgeous... ray of sunshine from the south", Eva says. "She had a thick southern drawl."

Renee had been a Pilates instructor; she was a dedicated jogger. "Just healthy," says Eva. "Healthy as a tick."

Her father, Doug, was a former navy pilot who worked for a tech security start-up that had contracts with the government. They went to the beach a lot and to church on Sundays.

One afternoon in December, 2015, when Doug was away on a business trip, Eva's mother did not pick her up from school. A classmate's mother gave Eva a lift home and they found the house dark, locked and silent. A neighbour broke down the door and they found Renee slumped over the end of the bed. An autopsy showed that she had suffered a heart attack brought on by a congenital heart defect that no one knew she had.

Eva was 14. Her stepbrother Ben, a Green Beret, was about to depart on his third tour of Afghanistan so his very organised wife, Beverly, moved into the house and served for a while as a surrogate mother, bringing some order to the household and teaching Eva how to stitch a hem and unclog a kitchen sink.

Her father spent more time at home too, and the two of them became like "war buddies" in their grief. He had become an adviser to the Republican presidential candidate and neurosurgeon Ben Carson. Then Carson dropped out of the race and held the occasional fundraising party at his house in Palm Beach for Donald Trump.

Eva's father went to one of these in September, 2016, and returned announcing that he had met someone. Her name was Ashley Byers; she was 23 and a model and former ballerina. He showed Eva a photo.

"I looked down at the smiling girl with long brown hair and the perfect plastic boobs rising up out of an airbrushed swimming pool like some kind of Maybelline mermaid," Eva writes. Her father assured her that "she's into social media and she loves the Lord". She does

Eva came home from school to find her new stepmother spread across the counter wearing only a thong

Doug Benefield and his second wife, Ashley

sound like someone you might meet at a Trump fundraiser. After a fortnight, her father announced that they had married.

Initially, Eva says, the two of them went shopping together and "tried to get a vibe going". But Ashley also repainted the inside of the house black and removed all the photographs of Eva's late mother. One day, Eva writes, she came home from school to find her new stepmother spread across the top of the kitchen counter wearing only a thong. Her stepmother appeared to have been waiting for her in this state of undress, she writes, and as Eva retreated swiftly towards her room, her stepmother followed her up the stairs.

"I noticed that her nipples were standing up like two exclamation points," she writes. "Her blood was up." She wanted to confront Eva about some trousers she bought on her father's credit card. "This was rich coming from the queen of a thousand thongs," Eva writes. She and a friend had nosed through her stepmother's wardrobe. "We found literal mountains of lingerie and nothing else," she writes. "It was like Victoria's Secret threw up in her drawers."

They did not get on, Eva and her stepmother. "She got meaner and colder and separated me and my dad more and more," she says. Her father seemed bewildered. "He loved me and he wanted the best for me, but then he was trying to keep Ashley happy on the other hand."

He had a reverse vasectomy and soon Ashley was pregnant. He began trying to help her create a ballet school in Charleston. At first, the plan appeared to be for a dance studio where she could teach, but soon they were talking about a national company.

Doug threw himself into it, raising money and putting in his own. They were going to "Uber-ise" ballet. There was going to be a reality television show and a clothing line. Forty-five dancers were hired and a ballet maven from New York

HAIR AND MAKE-UP: CARISSA SWANY AT SEE MANAGEMENT USING DIOR BEAUTY AND KENRA. CNN, POOL PHOTO/BRADENRON HERALD

Ashley alleged that Doug was violent, had attempted to poison her and might have murdered his first wife

Ashley Benefield testifying in her defence in 2024

to manage them. As the challenges of this venture manifested themselves – the ballet dancers arrived in Charleston to be met by a film crew but not much in the way of facilities or financing – half of them were abruptly fired and the principal ballerina quit in solidarity, and Eva's father and stepmother began to quarrel.

Eva's father went to Florida to attempt to patch things up with Ashley, who had given birth to a daughter and was attempting to block him from sharing custody. Ashley alleged that he was violent and that he had attempted to poison her. She also suggested that Doug might have murdered Eva's mother.

"She was hairs away from getting my mom taken out of the grave," Eva says.

So she actually believed it? Or was she looking for ammunition in the custody battle? "I think a little bit of both," Eva says. "I think she had just lied so much, she was starting to believe her own lies. That was kind of the sense that I got from her."

As her father started spending more time in Florida, Eva moved in with her stepbrother and then, during her last year in high school, into her own flat in Charleston. "Do you know what that does for the social career of a teenager?" she writes. "I was almost famous."

After high school, she got a job in a coffee shop and started art school, in Charleston. Whenever her father called he sounded stressed and he appeared to be in financial trouble: foreclosure notices were arriving at their family home. But he and Ashley and the baby were apparently moving to Maryland, and he was busy packing up their things. And every morning at the crack of dawn he would send her a cheerful text from Florida: a Bible verse or a photograph of his baby daughter.

On the morning of September 28, 2020, she woke to silence. She called her father, "and then started psycho-texting him", she writes. "I had a gut feeling. And she was always packing a gun."

Ashley maintained that it was self-defence and filed for immunity under Florida's "stand your ground" law, that allows you to shoot an intruder, if you are in fear of your life.

"I couldn't quite understand how my dad could be an intruder," she writes. "He was packing the house for them because they were all moving to Maryland... And I'm pretty sure my dad paid their rent."

By the terms of her father's will half of his estate went to his children and half to his spouse. Though there was nothing to leave but his pick-up truck. "He'd spent every last cent on Ashley and that ridiculous ballet," she writes.

In fact, Eva soon found herself being served with a lawsuit from the bank because her father was in default on mortgage payments. After yoga that day, when her teacher asked if everything was all right, Eva burst into tears and said she was being sued for half a million dollars.

The yoga teacher marched Eva back to her office and conference-called Eva's stepbrother and her Uncle Dave. Soon it was all in hand: the family home would be sold, her father's tangled affairs would be put in order. She sounds like a tremendous yoga teacher.

"She was my dad's high-school sweetheart," Eva replies. She had been one of the many people who "came out of the woodwork" when he died, who wanted to look out for her.

The yoga teacher accompanied Eva to the trial in Florida, where Ashley claimed that Doug had been rough with her, that she opened fire as he lunged at her. Prosecutors said she bore no injuries and that she had shot Doug in the side, that he was facing away from her. A jury convicted Ashley of manslaughter and in December, 2024, she was jailed for 20 years. She subsequently indicated she would appeal.

By this point Eva had gone to work for a T-shirt printing company in Charleston, doing their social media marketing. There she found herself, as an art school dropout, surrounded with blank T-shirts and printing apparatus and asked her boss if she could design a few herself. She was a fan of Kanye West, also known as Ye, "before he said all that stupid shit and became a crazy asshole", she writes. So she found a picture of him, "before the fall", placed a cowboy hat on his head and wrote, above it: "You've Ye'd Your Last Haw." This T-shirt apparently went viral: they were inundated with orders. She designed a follow-up, playing on West's rivalry with the comedian Pete Davidson, which proved equally popular.

This is the founding story of her fashion label, Ghost Cowboy. She already had an audience of about 200,000 followers on TikTok, as "the Black Swan murder girl".

"Yes, I cracked a few jokes about my dad getting murdered, because honestly, the way stuff went down so crazy and all, some of it was so absurd, in retrospect," she writes in the book. "I wanted folks to know that nothing is so terrible that you can't find a way to laugh at yourself.

"That's one of the good things about social media that people don't talk about; social media built me back up. It was a safe space where I felt heard and seen and even understood."

Eva says 99 per cent of the reactions to her videos are people telling her they are dealing with a bleak situation and she made them feel less alone.

"There's always that 1 per cent that's kind of like, 'You can't joke about this,' or 'You're messed up,'" she says. "I'm like, well, it's my situation, it's my story to tell. So I can joke about it if I want to. That's what comedians do all the time."

Has she thought of turning it all into a stand-up routine? "I wrote a stand-up set back way before the book was even an idea," she says. "Maybe one day."

I ask about the other thing, the thing she hints at in a TikTok video: that she might somehow be exploiting her father's murder to sell T-shirts.

"I have gotten the fear that people would think that I'm a sellout," she says. "I did monetise it a little bit, but I also did not get any form of life insurance or anything. So I was like, I might as well make a little money."

Her friends had offered to start a GoFundMe page, which, given her story, would probably have raised a fortune.

"But I just didn't like the idea of people giving me a handout," she says. "I felt like I was burdening enough people at that point, asking questions, trying to navigate life... I don't want to feel like I owe anybody anything, and I kind of want to say I did this on my own." ■

Ghost Girl: Surviving the Black Swan Murder *by Eva Benefield (Gallery Books, £20). To order, go to timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Discount for Times+ members*

Right: Ashley Baker in East Hampton, New York

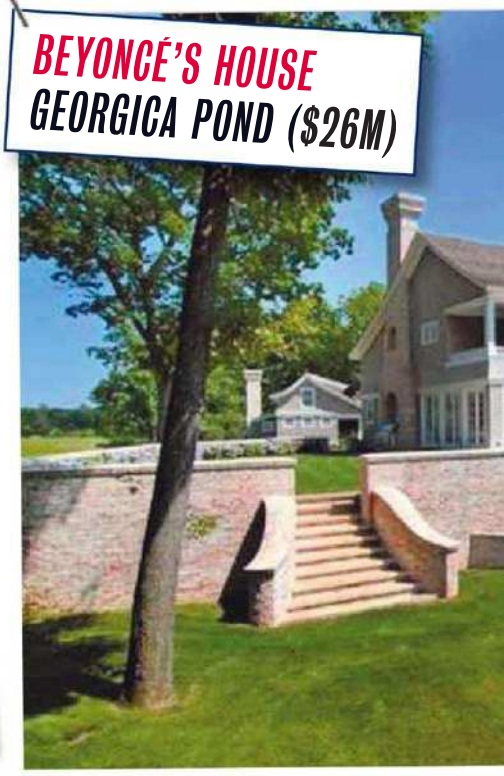
'THE SUPER-RICH HAVE PUSHED OUT THE POOR MILLIONAIRES AND THE DRIVERS SLEEP IN THE CAR PARK'

HOW THE HAMPTONS WENT STRATOSPHERIC

It has long been the place to be seen and to own a second home. But now only the uber-wealthy have a spare £20m for a weekend house – plus extras for the local Prada and Chanel shops. Report by (former resident) Ashley Baker

PORTRAIT Kareem Black

SARAH JESSICA PARKER AMAGANSETT



BEYONCÉ'S HOUSE GEORGICA POND ($26M)

Meg Ryan has a buyer for her $15.3 million (£11.4 million) farmhouse in Bridgehampton. Alec Baldwin listed his estate in Amagansett for $18.99 million. Ukrainian-born industrialist Len Blavatnik recently spent $115 million on an oceanfront estate. There's been talk of an intruder at Jay-Z and Beyoncé's $26 million, 17-acre property on Georgica Pond. JLo wore a fur coat to her birthday party in Montauk. Justin Bieber's been spotted in the Sagaponack General Store...

If you thought the Cotswolds was a rural region on steroids for its recent explosion in house prices and celebrity residents, it's got nothing on the Hamptons. In this string of bucolic, ocean-adjacent villages, 100 miles east of New York, properties are now so coveted that estate agents are predicting that 121 houses will have sold for more than $10 million by the end of this year, beating all records. These days in the Hamptons, the billionaires are pushing out the millionaires, an espresso will set you back $17 and Uber drivers sleep in their cars.

From above, this sought-after skinny spit of Long Island resembles the muscular half of a lobster claw, trimmed with dunes and beaches so perfect they could have been created by AI. On the ground, the action is based in Southampton, Bridgehampton, East Hampton, Sag Harbor, Sagaponack, Wainscott, Amagansett and Montauk. (But not, I should point out, Westhampton, which doesn't count.)

You could be forgiven for thinking these quaint former farming villages, which for a long time have been a summer home for Jerry Seinfeld, Sir Paul McCartney, Gwyneth Paltrow, Steven Spielberg and Brooke Shields, are just quiet rich-person refuges like the south of France, but no. The Hamptons is the most high-maintenance place in the universe. Nowhere else will you find lawns so green, picket fences so white, tablescapes so opulently and understatedly perfect.

For New Yorkers, making it big in the city isn't even close to enough. You must also be "a somebody" in the Hamptons – after all, when sitting down to that private-chef dinner on the veranda with influential friends, you'll need names to drop and something to show off about. For decades now, the Hamptons have drawn those with limitless ambition, the resources to match and an allergy to the word "no". It is a region coursing with alpha energy. You can technically while away an afternoon on a lounge chair but if you're incapable of switching off, go ahead and hunt for that third spouse and devise a competitor to Starlink – there'll always be a glass of rosé waiting for you at the end of the day.

My relationship with the Hamptons began 20 years ago, when I was a junior magazine editor living in Brooklyn. Every summer, I spent a thousand-ish dollars to experience the proverbial "Hamptons share". Back then, this was the way mere mortals could have their slice of heaven too.

We stayed in dormitory-like ranches, miles from the beach, hidden away far from Steven Spielberg's shingled estate, and decorated with whatever was on sale at TK Maxx. These were rented by entry-level finance guys, who used Ivy League maths skills to allocate bedrooms and divvy up expenses. I usually bought half a bedroom for one eighth of the summer, sleeping fitfully on a twin bed next to someone I sort of knew. (Recent legislation has cracked down on such arrangements.)

On Friday nights after work, we'd lug duffel bags full of bandage dresses and body glitter on the Long Island Rail Road (now $35), which makes the Thameslink look like a Belmond sleeper train. Over the next 48 hours, we'd laze around a modest pool and subsist on el cheapo rosé and shrimp salads, paid for with credit-card debt.

BROOKE SHIELDS IN HAMPTONS MAGAZINE

PREVIOUS SPREAD: COMPASS REAL ESTATE, GETTY IMAGES. HAIR: LEANNA CARTIER USING AMIKA. MAKE-UP: KERIN ZENGOTA USING ARMANI LUMINOUS SILK FOUNDATION. THIS SPREAD: GOFF PHOTOS, PLANET PHOTOS, MARK PETERSON/REDUX/EYEVINE, SHUTTERSTOCK

Clockwise from left: longtime resident Sarah Jessica Parker; Jay-Z and Beyoncé's East Hampton home; Hilaria Baldwin and family at a midsummer party; shopping on Main Street

The house share was my gateway drug. By 2014, my husband and I had scraped together enough to buy our first house. It wasn't in New York, where we lived and worked and would continue to rent our small apartment, but in the East Hampton hamlet of Springs. It has an artsy reputation thanks to former residents Jackson Pollock, Lou Reed and Willem de Kooning, but today it's home to many service workers and immigrants. Should they ever unionise and strike, the region would cease to function. In the Hamptons, no one mows their own lawn or cooks their own food.

For nearly a decade, my family spent most weekends there. New York was work, East Hampton was home. Then four years ago, when our family was relocating from New York to London, we sadly listed our cottage for sale. The next morning, at our coffee shop, the barista had already scoured the photos and asked pointedly how we arrived at that price. (Absolutely nothing escapes the locals.) "Life needs chapters," he said with a shrug. Four years on, I still visit East Hampton in the summer, staying with generous friends. If you are thinking of joining the fun "out east" (as the Manhattanites like to call it) too, here's what you need to know.

THE CELEBRITY LOCALS

Join Brooke Shields at SoulCycle; spot Gywneth in her Jeep

There's a new influx of regulars every summer. The Kardashians/Jenners pop in and out, the wealthiest Europeans and Brits are taking short-term rentals, and Young Hollywood flocks to Montauk. But the real royals here remain the longtime residents: Sarah Jessica Parker wandering the beach in Amagansett; Christie Brinkley tucking into salad at a pizza joint; Brooke Shields occupying a prime position at SoulCycle; Gwyneth Paltrow driving her Jeep Wrangler around Amagansett; Paul McCartney and Nancy Shevell shopping on Main Street.

THE LOOK IS KAFTANS AND $610 CHLOÉ JELLY SHOES, OR HEAD-TO-TOE LINEN AND HUGE HATS

THE PRICES

$13 for an espresso; $129 for a lobster salad

Meadow Lane in Southampton is known by locals as "Billionaires Lane" for good reason. Nearly a dozen of the secluded properties at the end of long driveways here have changed hands in the past 18 months, for more than $220 million in total. Even at the other end of the scale, an average home in the Hamptons now sells for $3.76 million. The largest oceanside estates can command $2 million rental a month. Property aside, there's plenty to make eyes water on the wallet front. A Saturday-night room at the Hedges Inn in East Hampton is $3,499 plus an extra $37 for avocado toast and $13 for a single espresso. A small iced coffee at Jack's Stir Brew? $7.50 plus tip. A steak at the Palm in East Hampton? $300. A lobster salad at Red Horse Market down the road costs $130 per pound. A tennis lesson, $250. A membership to the Tracy Anderson fitness studio: $900 a month, plus a $1,500 initiation fee. Once, I accidentally spent $300 on dog grooming.

THE UNIFORM

Head-to-toe Loro Piana and giant straw hats

For decades, the traditional Hamptons aesthetic was Nancy Meyers-movie adjacent (think Diane Keaton in *Something's Gotta Give*). It invited New Yorkers to replace their all-black uniforms with cream cotton sweaters and chinos. But now, the area is fashion central: Eileen Fisher sack dresses on the intellectuals of Sag Harbor; La DoubleJ kaftans and $610 Chloé jelly shoes on the art advisers of ➡

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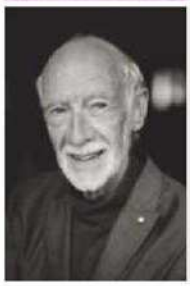

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Sagaponack; the tiniest Eres bikinis on the hard-bodied billionaire wives of Georgica Pond. The beekeeper look is the domain of (non-wrinkled) skin-obsessed Southamptonites. They hit the beach in hats the size of satellite dishes, long-sleeved swimsuits and SPF50 gloves.

Hedge-fund titans prefer head-to-toe linen from Loro Piana and Brunello Cucinelli. Nobody notices what their wives are wearing because we're too busy staring at their hats – the wider the brim, the more money in the bank, as revealing as the rings of a tree trunk. But you'll rarely encounter these couples in the flesh. They leave their $30-million fiefdoms under duress or an invitation from everyone's favourite art dealer, Larry Gagosian.

THE SHOPPING

New Bond Street-on-Sea

It's so much more than Ralph Lauren, although the king of the cable-knit sweater has an oceanfront estate in Montauk along with four stores and a coffee cart. Loewe, Louis Vuitton, Prada and Chanel have long usurped the doughnut and hardware stores.

THE FOOD

Provisions from Round Swamp Farm

If you aren't perturbed by a $79 plate of pasta, some of New York's top restaurants – Il Buco, Sant Ambroeus, Swifty's at the Hedges Inn – have outposts in Manhattan-sur-Mer. But homeowners host at home at the weekend, when the renters invade. Not that this will mean cooking. If the private chef has a day off, they will rely on salads, chicken goujons and blueberry pies from Round Swamp Farm. Here they charge by the pound and post the prices in an impossible-to-read font, but no matter how deep your pockets, your private wealth adviser would advise against it.

THE DRINKS

French rosé is the "summer water"

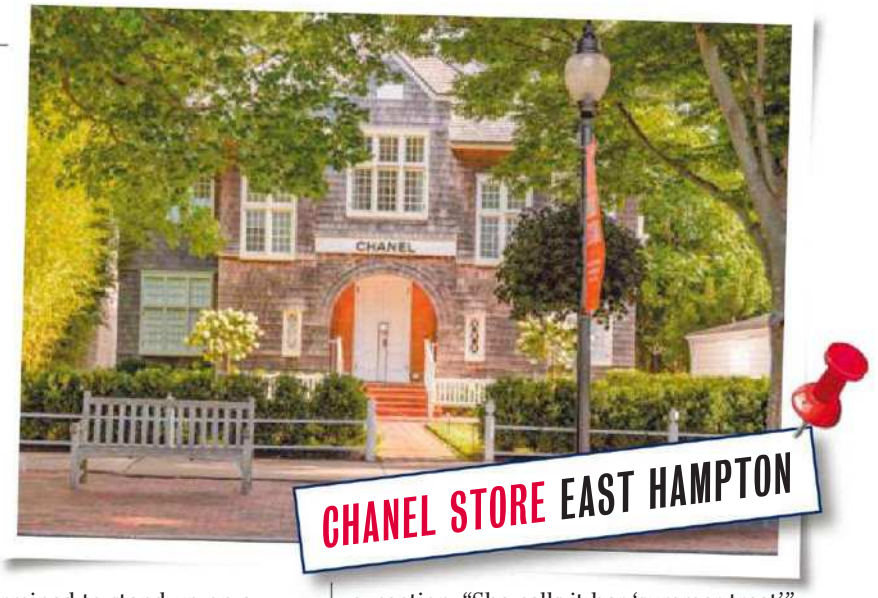
Now that the wealthy have replaced wine-collecting and cigar-smoking with cold-plunging and Hyrox training, they take a dim view of drinking. Unless they're in the Hamptons, where rosé is exempt. You'll empty at least two bottles of "summer water" (preferably French) at lunch but can reliably locate reinforcements in the beverage fridge. This uniquely American concept is found in finer three-car garages. It's also stocked with Diet Coke, kombucha and at least four flavours of seltzer water.

THE BEACHES

Sorry, residents' permits only

Egypt, Cooper's, Georgica and Two Mile Hollow: there's infinite space to while away a day with a $500 picnic from a passing farm shop. Migrating whales often breach off the coast, startling the bankers who are determined to stand up on a surfboard before their 60th birthdays. These beaches are quiet because parking requires a permit. To procure one, you must own or lease a home. The town does sell a few summer passes, but they cost $750 and sell out immediately in February.

ALAMY



The Chanel Hamptons Ephemeral Boutique in East Hampton

THE NEIGHBOURS

Hide from them on your estate if you can

Nowhere more than here, hell is other people. It's the Upper East Side housewife with the $300,000 facelift cutting in line at the grocery store because her hand-cut ice cubes are already melting. It's a cross-armed Hilaria Baldwin, wife of Alec, glaring at you in a public playground because your six-year-old is encouraging dangerous use of the slide. It's the fraternity brother whose idea of a summer job is walking his own German shepherd while taking up two spots outside the espadrille store with his Jeep Gladiator.

THE TRAFFIC NEVER STOPS. INVEST IN THE $25K HELICOPTER AND SEAPLANE PASS

THE AESTHETICS

House calls for blowouts and Botox

There is no shortage of aestheticians ready to fill under-eye hollows and soften stretch marks. The city's finest Botox providers, Dr Robert Anolik and Dr Dennis Gross, never sleep. In the summer, they have satellite locations "out east" and might even make house calls.

And just because you're wearing a hat does not mean that you will skip that blowout. The most in-demand beautifiers are under-the-radar glam teams. One told me she has a client in Southampton who gets her hair and make-up done every Monday, Thursday and Friday without exception. "She calls it her 'summer treat'," the hairstylist says with a shrug. "And I make about $20,000." Once, she fired up her curling iron at 5am so another client could look her best for a SoulCycle class.

THE TRAFFIC

Invest in a $25,000 helicopter pass

The Montauk Highway – the single two-lane road that snakes from Southampton to Montauk – never stops heaving. It is filled with only two types of cars: Range Rover-adjacent and the patched-up Toyotas of hourly workers.

The Hampton Jitney ($41), a private bus, used to be the preferred means of transport from the city, but the last time I braved one – at 6am on a Wednesday – it took four and a half hours to get from the Upper East Side to East Hampton. Enter Blade, a 39-minute helicopter and seaplane service. Off-peak tickets can be found for $795, but congestion pricing is real; most seats I found were priced over $1,100. The "Limitless" pass costs $25,000, but allows you to book as often as you like from May to September.

THE DETRACTORS

The Hudson Valley brigade

Many of the New York establishment now avoid Long Island. Instead, they've bought second homes in upstate New York or Litchfield County, Connecticut. "There are more assholes per square inch [in the Hamptons] than in a communal john," a Manhattanite friend exclaimed. Indeed, when the former Vanity Fair editor Graydon Carter and Alessandra Stanley founded Air Mail magazine, where I used to work, they had a list of banned words: "The Hamptons" was chief among them. When describing the region, which we tried to do sparingly, we were required to call it "the eastern tip of Long Island".

In my view, though, the Hamptons are such an easy thing to hate, but you've got to admire their sheer audacity. And you too are invited – if you are prepared to pay with your hard dollars, along with a piece of your soul. ■

Pout!

9 BEST BUYS FOR LEGS & FEET

Nadine Baggott picks her favourite remedies for hard heels, gnarly nails and dry summer skin

There's a truism that British beauty routines end at the jawline, so I can only imagine the state of our feet and legs when the temperatures soar. Hell, I don't have to imagine: I too am a Brit and just need to look down to see the neglect. Here's how I remedy dry, scaly shins, hard heels and manky nails quickly. My beauty mantra is minimum effort, maximum results, and these all tick both boxes.

1 THE HIT OF HAPPINESS BODY LOTION

Ameliorate Transforming Body Lotion Illuminating Glow *(£24; cultbeauty.co.uk)*
Regular readers will know I often champion this exfoliating body lotion, rich in lactic acid and emollients, to tackle lizard legs and strawberry bumps on the backs of arms and legs in a flash, but did you know there is an instant glow illuminating version? All the powerful actives but with a hit of happiness in the form of a flattering yet subtle, soft-skin, bronzy shimmer.

2 THE UNSEXY FOOT CREAM

Flexitol Advanced Overnight Foot Cream *(£8.99; boots.com)*
Surely the most unsexy product you'll ever buy but damn, it is brilliant. At 30 per cent urea, it will not only moisturise but also exfoliate hard heels and sandal-dusty, ashy skin while you sleep. Slather on, apply a pair of cotton trainer socks and within a week your feet will be transformed. Once you have your feet baby soft, you only need to use it once a week overnight.

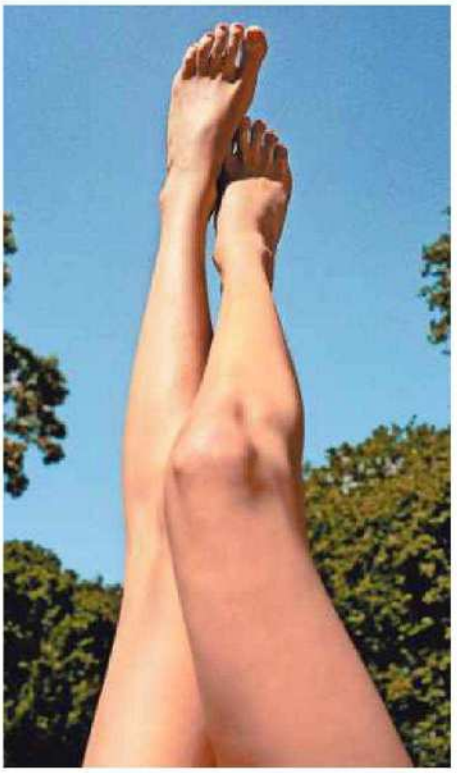
3 NO TIME FOR A PEDI POLISH

Manucurist Active Smooth *(£16; cultbeauty.co.uk)*
You know those Carolyn Bessette Kennedy nude nails? Well, this is that in a bottle. It's formulated to give a healthy nude gloss, but also to fill in any ridges or nail imperfections in a single coat – two if needed. Picture your nails before you bumped your big toe, took up jogging or wore those too-tight stilettos that left your nails gnarly.

4 THE TANNING SERUM

Vita Liberata The Glaze Peptide Tanning Serum *(£29; boots.com)*

GETTY IMAGES, ELISABETH HOFF



This foot cream is the most unsexy product but damn, it's brilliant

Its Body Blur leg make-up is brilliant (that should be on this list but you know it already, right?), but this new serum is also excellent. It is a slow-burn self-tanning serum, it's superlight yet builds colour every day you apply it. It works for the whole body, but for legs it's seamless and easy to apply. I'd use a huge kabuki brush for best results; Vita Liberata has one but so does Primark.

5 THE BODY OVERACHIEVER

Erborian CC Body *(£44; sephora.co.uk)*
Those white face creams you've seen influencers apply, which turn into a superlight foundation that matches their skin tone – this is the body equivalent. Microparticles of moisturiser burst to release a subtle pigment, which means you can cover spider veins, shaving nicks, old insect bite marks and even add a healthy colour to your skin. Like a body moisturiser but with added credits. This is an overachiever.

6 THE FAB FOOT FILE

The Body Shop Foot File *(£7; the bodyshop.com)*
Another unsexy product that delivers. The irony that a part of the body that is so regularly fetishised needs the most prosaic products to look its best is not lost on me, but if you are having a summer of flip-flops, Birks and sandals, then your body's reaction is to form hard skin and this is the only way to keep it at bay after using the Flexitol urea cream above. Stick it in your shower and use for a few seconds at the end when the skin is water-softened and comes away with minimum effort.

7 THE INGROWN HAIR TREATMENT

Sephora Ingrown Hair Pads *(£15.99; sephora.co.uk)*
If you look down at your legs and see lots of black or dark brown dots after shaving or waxing, then you need to unclog your follicles. These pads are wiped over the area and will deep-dive to get rid of sebum and hair pigment and to unlock the new hairs so they can be shaved or waxed again.

8 THE SUMMER COCKTAIL SPF SPRAY

Coola Classic Sunscreen Spray Piña Colada SPF30 *(£25; sephora.co.uk)*
I know dermatologists hate sunscreens in spray form, but sometimes on the go it's all you can stand. This aerosol means you can reach anywhere you want, including your legs, plus it comes in unscented or three fruity summer options – this one, Guava Mango and Coconut. If you can't get to Ibiza, at least you'll smell like you could.

9 THE SKIN SMOOTHING OIL

Bioderma Atoderm shower oil *(£24; boots.com)*
If you are shaving or waxing, then this is the best product you can use during or after epilation in the shower. It is formulated for the driest, most sensitive skin types and leaves legs – in fact your whole body – feeling silky as it emulsifies away in water to a milk. Think of it as a cleansing oil for your face but supersized for your body. Shave with it and thank me later. ■

8 POST-HOLIDAY BEAUTY FIXES

If your skin is sun-frazzled and your hair is out of control, here are the instant fixes that you need

Let's be honest, we all let our beauty standards slide the minute we go abroad, especially on a sunny holiday with little care in the world except bagging a sunlounger and keeping to a five-a-day cocktail limit. Now you're back, having braved the sunburn, pool and sandy, windswept beaches, it feels like you're paying the price. Don't worry – here are my first-rate fixes.

1 THE SKIN DRENCH SERUM

Hada Labo Tokyo Premium Lotion Intense 7xHA Super Deep Hydrator *(£16.49; superdrug.com)*
Before Japanese and Korean beauty were even a thing, this ultraluxe yet affordable serum was a cult buy. Use as a first step after cleansing morning and night, right around your eyes, over lips and down your neck and chest – it instantly plumps and hydrates, and preps skin for whatever you do next.

2 THE EXFOLIATING MIRACLE

Sunday Riley Good Genes All-in-One Lactic Acid Treatment *(£70; spacenk.com)*
Young people on TikTok will bang on about acids for blemishes, but once you get to a certain age and feel your skin is dry and lacklustre (especially post-flight and holiday), a lactic acid is your best choice. It will hydrate as it gently exfoliates dry, damaged skin cells. Sleep in it once and see a difference; use it three times a week and your skin will be transformed, as if you'd never set foot on a plane.

3 THE HAIR REPAIR MASK

Unove Deep Damage Treatment EX *(£22; boots.com)*
I discovered this in Korea and found it lives up to its excellent reputation. In fact, if you're reading this before you go off on holiday, pack it and wear at the beach; if not, apply it the minute you get back. It makes even my grey, fluffy, damaged hair soft and manageable after a single use. PS: there's also a lightweight blow-dry oil in the range that's brilliant for fighting frizz.

4 THE ELEVATED AFTERSUN

Eucerin After Sun Sensitive Relief Gel-Cream *(£18.20; sephora.co.uk)*

Elena top, £180, Melissa Odabash

Using this lactic acid three times a week will transform your skin

Do you find your skin itches after a shower when abroad or just back from holiday? It's not unusual when changing water pH levels, then exposing dehydrated skin to hard water deposits on top of sun exposure. This is an aftersun, but it also stops that itching and instantly calms sensitised skin. Not really a surprise as it comes from a company that makes some of the best sunscreens.

5 THE ONE-AND-DONE SELF TANNER

Dove Summer Revived Sunkissed Glow Gradual Tan Lotion *(£4.99; boots.com)*
You really should take this with you on holiday and use as your aftersun because it gives the best gradual tan, avoiding sun damage, and is the best value around. You can put it on your face too. Oh, and it comes in two shades. Dare I say it extends your tan – although we all know we shouldn't be tanning, right?

6 THE WIND-BURNT LIP SAVIOUR

The Ordinary PHA 5% Exfoliating Lip Serum *(£7.60; boots.com)*
I wouldn't normally recommend exfoliating your lips (all that nonsense about scrubs and toothbrushes will do more damage to sun-baked and weather-beaten lips), but this is very gentle and worth a try if your lips are flaking and dry. Please do not pick your lips; instead, apply this at night and sleep with it on. Repeat in the morning and within two days your lips should be back to normal. If they are peeling, lightly rub with a towel post-shower.

7 THE SUN-REVERSE MOISTURISER

The Skin Diary Age Defence Moisturising Day Cream *(£92; theskindiary.com)*
I know, I know – it's horribly expensive. But this moisturiser is a tick list of sun-damage repair enzymes and if you have either historical sun damage or more recent signs of sun exposure, this has been formulated by Britain's best dermatologists to address the issue. It combines the repair enzymes with a light, pleasant-to-use daily sunscreen to prevent further damage. I just wish it was more affordable.

8 THE SALMON SPERM OPTION

Anua PDRN Hyaluronic Acid 100 Moisturising Cream *(£24; cultbeauty.co.uk)*
Look, salmon sperm PDRN (polydeoxyribonucleotide) appears to be everywhere in skincare right now, but the truth is it's a large molecule that has trouble getting into the skin (unlike in aesthetic treatments, where it is injected), so temper your enthusiasm a little. But this is a great daily moisturiser and I do find that it hydrates beautifully, sits well under make-up and plumps fine, crepey skin. What's more, you will find spurious products priced at four times the amount with vegan PDRN, for which there's very little evidence that it benefits the skin. ■

Nadine can be found on Instagram @nadinebaggott where she will answer all your beauty questions

Eating out
Giles Coren

‘Yes, it’s a buffet. And hilarious. Those of you who bang on about portion sizes and value will be over the moon’

TOM JACKSON

The Grove, Watford

Okay, so the other week I said the best way to deal with the UK heat crisis was to lean in and accept that we are a very different country now, wear grown-up clothes, cycle across town in the 35C furnace pretending it’s nothing and eat a steaming hot curry. And I am not taking it back. But I have also tried another way, which is to go, “Wahoo! It’s the holidays! Let’s go somewhere with a pool!”

It was approaching Friday lunchtime, my copy was filed, the kids were off school, the temperature was off the clock and I, inexplicably, do not have a swimming pool in my garden. Or know anyone who has. So I set to googling restaurants near London with big outdoor pools, which turn out not to exist. And then hotels near London with big outdoor pools, which do but are rare.

The internet offered me – within an hour of my home – only Cliveden, which I love but which was full, and a place called the Grove, which had two bog standard (but, crucially, air conditioned) rooms left at a cost of quite a lot of pounds, which are neither here nor there, since I’m not writing about them and won’t be claiming them on expenses.

So I shouted to the kids to pack their iPads and swimmers, told my baffled wife the plan and 52 minutes later we were standing in a circle in the shallow end of a big blue pool under the remorseless Hertfordshire sun, sipping beers, piña coladas and Cokes.

“This is literally the most Giles Coren thing I’ve ever done,” said Esther.

Now, whether this was a reference to the disappointingly warm (because heated) and busy pool or the hen party standing next to us, or the screaming children with inflatables, or all the fat dads with tats eating chips at their sunbeds, or just the glorious impulsiveness of the adventure, I don’t know. But I thought it was marvellous.

The older buildings are magnificent (with a classier crowd it could have been Cliveden), the gardens are lush, the staff are delightful (and gorgeous) and we had four loungers in a row, opposite the pool, under parasols, in actual sand (it’s called “Ralph’s Beach”). Behind us there was a table tennis table with a view of the cocktail bar, where Sam beat me fair and square for the first time ever (at table tennis, not cocktail drinking – that’s still a way off) and when everyone got peckish we left our kit on the beds (no Germans around to complain) and walked round a long privet hedge to a huge outdoor restaurant in a woody glade called Skwd, from which was emanating a wonderful smell of meat, specifically lamb, specifically lamb chops, grilling over charcoal, strongly reminiscent of the long strip of ocakbasi joints on Green Lanes in north London, which you can

The pool at the Grove

smell from Kentish Town when the wind is in the east.

A big handsome Turkish-looking guy handed us menus offering ali nazik, adana, beyti, kisir salad... "Are you Turkish?" I asked him, in Turkish.

I could see he was thinking of saying "no" as a joke, but he said, in English, "Everyone here is Turkish." So I ordered hummus kavurma, which is hummus with warm lamb chips in it and is one of my favourite dishes in the world, and it was perfect: a sharp, tahini-heavy hummus piled with spicy lamb, its red oil running into the dip with sweet round little pine nuts, served with seeded crackers but better with floppy Turkish bread. And also some lahmacun, hot flatbreads topped with ground lamb and chilli, which get called "Kurdish pizza" and are truly my favourite snack in the world. These were hot and crisp-edged, with parsley to pile on, and lemon wedges to squeeze over, before folding and gobbling them while still in our wet swimmers, with our bare feet in the cool grass, on a weekday in flipping Watford!

We didn't overdo it because it was 3pm and we had dinner booked for 7, so just an Aegean salad of tomatoes, capers, red onions, kalamata olives and a bottle of Whispering Angel (which they brought, with ice, in about 12 seconds, eliciting from Esther the observation, "They've met a north London mum before") and then back to the pool for pissed ping-pong and a snooze under my novel (*Drayton and Mackenzie* by Alexander Starritt – highly recommended for the beach).

Dinner was... hilarious. You'll see the Grove's evening offering touted on their website as "Luxury Watford Buffet" and that is as perfectly crafted a three-word moniker as you will find, each word radically qualifying the other two, to crystallise the expectations of the consumer.

So, yes, it's a buffet. A huge and impossibly varied one with a multi-meat carvery, a live pasta station, an Asian station, a curry spot, a robata grill, a seafood station, a barbecue, vast salad bar, a stone-baked pizza station, cheese board, dessert room with chocolate fountain...

And yes, it's luxurious. It's £94/head and you can get your £94/worth (in modern restaurant terms) if you are big and fat and greedy enough, which a great many of the guests were. There is "bottomless caviar" (much raved about on TikTok, I see) and a sushi station. And there is a decent wine list from which I ordered a delicious Puligny-Montrachet Le Trézin for a very reasonable £145 (I've seen it well north of £200 on other lists).

But it is Watford luxury. So the caviar comes from a herring not a sturgeon (which is a raw material that is, essentially, free). And the sushi is just salmon, lean tuna and yellowtail in preparations that are one up from Pret, one down from Yo! And when I asked the waiter whether he thought the puligny or the meursault was in better nick he said, "Do you prefer red or white?"

I'm not interested in gluttonous mixed platefuls of English pizza, roast

The Grove's buffet

pork, beef and chicken, sushi, curry and noodles all one plate, so I got my value, and got it in spades, by eating just poached cold langoustines with garlic aïoli, 14 of them, which were the ideal foil to my posh chardonnay, and then some perfectly conditioned Baron Bigod with water biscuits. Sam got his (the kids' price is just £47) by eating 26 chicken wings and half a shoulder of very good, sticky, blackened, slow barbecued pork.

Esther ate mostly salad (for £94!), which she thought was "gleaming", and then some barbecued ribs and a fair chunk of the huge, golden, very clearly homemade bread and butter pudding with crème anglaise.

Kitty muffed it in the classic novice fashion, putting a huge Yorkshire pudding, some maki rolls, a slice of pepperoni pizza, a portion of cod, six slices of salami and a tomato salad all on the same plate and then being defeated quite early on by the mess. But there were some big, big lads and lasses doing something very similar and going back for refills all night, who will have been getting insanely great value.

By my weekly metrics, the food quality here is about six out of ten, but the quantity is quite literally infinite. Those of you who bang on about portion sizes and value and always ask if I have to – ha ha ha – go to Macky D's afterwards, will no doubt be over the moon. And who cares about provenance and precision and authenticity when there's a pool and a beach and piña coladas and ping-pong barely half an hour from the national capital? This is not just a Luxury Buffet; this is a Luxury Watford Buffet. And it hasn't seen the last of the Corens. ■

The Grove
Chandler's Cross, Watford
(01923 807807; thegrove.co.uk)

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Buffet 6
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Beta male
Robert Crampton

‘Men, don’t go topless – even in this heatwave. Apparently women hate it’

DAN KENNEDY

What do I think about men going topless in public? It’s a massive debate – it won’t go away, not with all these temperature records tumbling. I feel duty-bound to issue a statement.

Context is all, obviously. The parameters of acceptability – what in politics is called “the Overton window” – is: pool and beach are legitimate places for a chap to get his nipples and navel out; indoor public spaces (bus, train, shop, office, school, village hall tombola, church-based raffle, crematorium) are off limits. Everywhere in between is up for grabs.

Male toplessness on public transport, incidentally, really is an actual thing. Hard to believe, but true. I canvassed female opinion and they took a dim view. “What?” I said. “You’ve seen guys on the bus not wearing a shirt?” “Absolutely,” came the reply. “It’s disgusting.”

Except it’s a lot less disgusting, as one or two admitted, in certain circumstances. The consensus was that “men who are super-hot [and they didn’t mean overheated, fat, sweaty blokes] like that fit man in the Diet Coke ad, on the building site, where the secretaries all rush to the window, they’re OK.” As are regular shirtless joggers Paul Mescal and Matthew McConaughey. The hypocrisy is rampant. A survey revealed that although three quarters of respondents think it is unacceptable for men to go topless away from the pool or beach, almost half are cool with semi-nudity if the guy is “in peak physical shape”.

’Twas ever thus. I’m old enough to remember Kevin Keegan (RIP) and Billy Bremner shedding their shirts after being sent off following an altercation during the Charity Shield in 1974. This caused a stir at the time, not least because Super Kev was so ripped. We weren’t used to a gym-conditioned male body. I recall my mum saying Billy shouldn’t have taken his top off, but on balance it was OK that Kevin did.

As an aside, hospitals are so blinking hot, whatever the weather outside, and people inside are in such distress, that I reckon a fella discarding his pyjama top for blessed relief can be overlooked. Even encouraged. If we are to go down the mass air-con route, I hope hospitals get kitted out first. In the meantime, windows that actually open would be welcome.

Anyway, where does that leave us? In the street, is where. And in the street is where it gets complicated. A young colleague, on her way into work, saw a guy in the City striding along in the full office rig, only with his shirt completely unbuttoned. It’s not a great look – jacket, tie, shirt gone Awol – but hey, the poor fella was hot, right? Wrong. She did not approve. “Was he in good nick?” I asked. “Bang average,” she said. Disapprovingly.

I heard a lot, seeking female views on this, about moobs, spare tyres, hairy backs, hairy nipples, beer bellies, paunches, hairy beer bellies, hairy paunches and back fat, usually prefixed by the word “sweaty.” I also heard, though less often, and with less opprobrium but genuine contempt all the same, about posers, show-offs, gym bunnies, meatheads and muscle jocks. Sweaty flab is – who knew? – not considered a great look. But blatant vanity gets a major thumbs down too. Research backs this up. Guys on dating apps who put shirtless pics on their profile get fewer matches. Even if they’re in great shape.

Bottom line, guys: cover the hell up! Whether you’re buff, bog standard or borderline obese, no shirt is no win. And, by way of a bonus, other men won’t hate you. Near where I live, dozens – scores in this weather – of shredded young lads gather to work out topless on exercise bars in the park. They strut, they preen, they perform impressive gymnastic feats, handstands even. Every single other bloke in the vicinity, including me, loathes them.

I surprise myself with this advice. Generally, I’m pro-informality. Let’s just get comfortable, I say – it worked in Silicon Valley. And I speak as someone who, over the years, has been photographed several times for this newspaper while not wearing a shirt. I like to claim, like an earnest young actress making her way, that the role required it. A feature on synchronised swimming. A feature on getting (or rather, not getting) a six-pack. A learned monograph on the art of male sunbathing.

And yet, there have to be limits. The other night, even at 9pm the air like breathing lukewarm soup, I dutifully (no hosepipe!) watered the back garden wearing shorts and damn all else. Progressing to the front, visible for all the world to see, I put a T-shirt on. Why? Because it felt respectful, and it felt appropriate, and it felt unthreatening.

But also because it felt like I’m not in the best shape at the moment. Not bad, but not great. If I were tip-top tickety-boo, that T-shirt would have been left behind. ■

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TIMES Events

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